

**Post-Millennium Development Goals: Analysis of Education Policies and Gender Inequity  
in Basic Education in Ghana – A Case Study of Tema**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on Ghana's effort to achieve gender equity in basic education after signing on to the Millennium Development Goals. In addition to the work of the Girls Education Unit in tackling school retention, the government has initiated other policies, including school grants, school feeding programmes, and free school uniforms to provide girls with equal opportunities to access the full cycle of basic education by 2015. However, even with these policies, girls still have a lower school completion rate relative to their male counterparts. Drawing on the intersectional framework of Black Feminist Thought, this study explores the professional experiences of education policy administrators and the views of parents to understand the impact of education policies on gender equity in public education. In this qualitative study, I conducted in-depth interviews with policy administrators and educators in Ghana and held focus group meetings with parents of children enrolled in public schools. The interviews revealed several trends and practices that may account for girls' low school completion rates. Among them were the preference for male children, the burden of girls' domestic chores, teenage pregnancy, early marriage, sexual harassment, the foreign influence of social media, broken homes, and traditional cultural practices. The focus group meetings revealed that gender equity in education is hindered by partisan politics, the politicization of policies to attract electoral votes, and the discontinuity of previous governments' education initiatives. The study's findings reveal that to promote gender equity, underlying economic and social barriers must be interrogated and addressed. These barriers include family poverty, girls working as domestic house cleaners to augment family income, poor school infrastructure, lack of teaching and learning materials, and inadequate school facilities. The study recommends a collaborative approach by stakeholders to overcome the socio-cultural barriers. If there is to be an equal opportunity for basic educational attainment, the government needs to be transparent about their role because education policies are not politically neutral. Also, policymakers must allocate adequate funds to support the Girls Education Unit and the existing education programmes like the Capitation Grant (Abolishing of fees), free textbooks, free school uniforms, and the school feeding initiative.

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## **DEDICATION**

The dedication of this thesis is to my late brother, Jerry Kennedy Seshie-Doe, who died in a motor accident on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008. His death changed my life in many ways. I became stronger, more determined and resilient in my desire to bring joy to my parents and two surviving brothers. I hope this accomplishment is a source of pride for my family.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB.....	African Development Bank
ADP.....	Accelerated Development Plan
BECE.....	Basic Education Certificate Examination
BFT.....	Black Feminist Thought
CAP.....	Condition Assessment Program
CGS.....	Capitation Grant Scheme
CIDA.....	Canadian International Development Agency
CSO.....	Civil Society Organizations
DfID.....	Department for International Development
ECE.....	Early Childhood Education
EFA.....	Education for All
EKE.....	Education for the Knowledge Economy
ESP.....	Education Strategic Plan
FCUBE.....	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FGDs.....	Focus Group Discussions
FGM.....	Female Genital Mutilation
GAMA.....	Greater Accra Metropolitan Area
GES.....	Ghana Education Service
GEU.....	Girls' Education Unit
GLSS.....	Ghana Living Standard Survey
GNAT.....	Ghana National Association of Teachers
GPI.....	Gender Parity Index
ICT.....	Information Communication Technology
IDRA.....	International Development Research Agency
IGF.....	Internally Generated Funds
IMF.....	International Monetary Fund
JHS.....	Junior High School
MDGs.....	Millennium Development Goals
MoE.....	Ministry of Education
MWCA.....	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs

NAGRAT.....	National Association of Graduate Teachers
NCCE.....	National Commission for Civic Education
NGO.....	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD.....	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PI.....	Principal Investigator
RME.....	Religious and Moral Education
SFP.....	School Feeding Programme
SHEP.....	School Health Education Programme Coordinator
SHS.....	Senior High School
SMC.....	School Management Committee
SPAM.....	School Performance Appraisal Meeting
STEM.....	Science, Technical, Engineering and Mathematics
TLMs.....	Teaching-Learning Materials
TMA.....	Tema Metropolitan Area
UN.....	United Nations
UNESCO.....	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF.....	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID.....	U.S. Agency for International Development
WAEC.....	West African Examination Council
WASSCE.....	West African Senior School Certificate Examination

## **CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction to the Study**

A friend once told me that growing up as a female child was difficult for her because she had to constantly struggle to prove she was as able as a boy to succeed in life. Upon her birth, my friend's father was disappointed because she was a girl. This disappointment led her father to decide not to send her to school because, in her culture, girls are not perceived as good enough to succeed academically. In response, my friend's mother, knowing the challenges facing uneducated women, resolved to educate her. She herself was illiterate, perceived differences between herself and educated Ghanaian women, and saw formal education as the principal means of nourishing and developing her daughter's potential. In the face of her father's resistance, my friend's mother took the initiative of ensuring that she had a proper education.

The above narrative about the inferiority of girls is a common phenomenon in Ghana, where cultural ideologies inform specific preferences regarding the sex of a child. Male children are preferred to female children because, culturally, boys are the legacy of their fathers and because they ensure the continuity of the family name. The expectation is that female children will get married and start a family of their own, as expressed in this statement from Roche (2014): "Educating a girl is like watering a flower in another man's garden" (p. 745). In view of the cultural preference for male children, the education of girls receives little attention. The above-highlighted ideology, pervasive in Ghanaian society, needs debunking.

In this study, cultural perceptions that influence gender inequity in basic education are explored in relation to factors, including ethnicity (locally known as tribes), social class, religion, and spatial inequalities, that exacerbate inequity in the educational attainment of girls and boys. The study also explores the role that government policies could play in ameliorating the gender

differences in basic educational attainment. The goals of my thesis are to enhance understanding of the impact of education policies on girls in order to broaden the discourse of gender equity in basic education in Ghana. It is also to provide a platform for educators, policy administrators, and parents to share their experiences and propose policy reforms that can lead to inclusion and equal opportunity in public education.

## **1.2 Situating myself as a Researcher**

In exploring the impact of education policies on gender and the low educational attainment of girls in Ghana, it is vital to acknowledge my ethnicity and social status in relation to Black Feminist Thought, which is the theoretical framework for this study. Ethnicity in Ghana is a group with the belief that they share common descent, migration history, similar physical characteristics and customs without being connected by blood relationships (La Ferrara, 2007). I am part of a patrilineal group known as Ewe. Based on the kinship rules, myself, including my two brothers, are considered part of our father's kin group. Also, the traditional laws of inheritance state that male children are the ones to inherit properties belonging to their father. Growing up in the knowledge that my brothers were the heir to all properties belonging to my father inspired me to take schooling seriously so I could become a career woman able to afford and live a meaningful life.

Although my experience regarding family inheritance is like many other girls and women belonging to patrilineal ethnic groups in Ghana, I had the opportunity of being raised in a middle-class family in an urban city in the greater Accra region, which is Ghana's capital. My social status allowed me to attend a private school for basic and secondary education. This educational background paved the way for me to earn my bachelor's degree at the University of Ghana where I graduated with first-class honours. My second degree was in Social Justice and

Equity Studies from Brock University in Canada. The good education I received was the foundation of all the privileges I enjoy as an African woman, so I decided to focus this doctoral work on exploring gender inequity in education with a focus public schools in Ghana. My ethnicity and social status have shaped my ideas as a scholar-activist and an intersectional feminist. I am aware of the vital role formal education plays in empowering marginalized groups because of my position as a female international scholar from Ghana. As articulated in Black Feminist scholarship, a particular source of subordination (female in the context) varies depending on its combination of other potential sources like ethnicity and social class (Collins, 1989). I know my social status is important because it provides an alternative knowledge different from the experiences of girls who come from patrilineal ethnic groups in Ghana but are beneficiaries of the public school system because of their lower socioeconomic status.

### **1.3 Approach to the Study**

The approach that has shaped this study is the transformative. The transformative approach proposes that the “research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression at whatever level it occurs” (Creswell, 2014, p. 9). This transformative approach focuses on the needs of disenfranchised groups and advance a movement for change. As Creswell (2014) argues, feminist perspectives, racialized discourses, and critical theory are orientations integrated into the transformative approach because the focus is to interrogate the experiences of marginalized groups.

The research approach also aims to stimulate an action agenda for reform to change the experiences of girls in Ghana and the institutions that dictate their lives (Creswell, 2014). I draw on Black Feminist Thought to explore the intersecting sources of oppression and inequity regarding girls’ education in Ghana. The purpose of the study is to determine the reasons and

explanations for the failure of the Ghanaian government's education policies and practices in achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of gender equity in basic education. The MDGs consist of eight objectives put forward by the United Nations (UN) to address development issues (Ministry of Education, 2003). One of the eight goals is to achieve universal basic education, including gender equity, by 2015 (Ministry of Education, 2003). This study therefore, aims to create a platform for the stewards and beneficiaries of education policy to share their lived experiences through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The expected outcome involves highlighting the need for changes and justifying why educational policy reform is essential, as Ghana missed the MDG gender equity target of 100% completion rate by 2015.

#### **1.4 Background of the Study and Research Purpose**

After Ghana's independence in 1957, the government introduced the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) to promote formal education (Akyeampong, 2010; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). The ADP aimed at ensuring compulsory basic education for all children from primary to secondary school levels (Akyeampong, 2010; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). In addition to the new education policy, the Ghanaian government subsidized primary schooling by providing free textbooks, stationery, and furniture to all public schools (Akyeampong, 2010; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Despite efforts to promote equal access to schooling, girls recorded lower enrollment rates (Sutherland-Addy, 2002). Having recognized that girls' access to basic education was restricted, the government reformed the objectives of the ADP. Evidence of the gender differences during the 1980s is seen in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 below shows that girls' enrolment was consistently lower than that of boys in the 1980s. In 1987, the government proposed Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education



(FCUBE) to expand access and improve equity and quality (Sutherland-Addy, 2002; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). The aim of the FCUBE policy was to ensure that all children (boys and girls) would be able to complete basic education (Akyeampong, 2009).

Table 1.1

*National Gross School Admission Rate by Gender: 1980/81 – 1986/87*

Year	Girls	Boys
1980/81	75.67	87.93
1981/82	77.03	90.45
1982/83	77.43	91.35
1983/84	78.17	92.69
1984/85	78.52	93.14
1985/86	78.53	92.29
1986/87	78.54	92.27

*Note.* From Sutherland-Addy (2002, p. 95) UNICEF Report

In 1995, a national seminar on girls' education was organized by Ghana's Ministry of Education, the World Bank, and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). The seminar aimed to explore the reasons for gender differences in school attendance of boys and girls between 1987 and 1995 (Ghana Education Service, 2002). The outcome of the national education seminar was the establishment of a Girls' Education Unit (GEU) within the Ministry of Education in 1997 (Atta, 2015; Ministry of Education Report, 2010). Based on reports from Ghana Education Service (2002), external agencies funded the GEU with the mandate to work on improving girls' enrolment in school in order to raise their numbers to equal those of boys by 2005. The unit was responsible for reducing the drop-out rate for girls from 30% to 20% at the primary school level and from 29% to 15% at the Junior High School level (Ghana Education Service, 2002). The ultimate goal of the GEU was to raise the retention rate of girls in public schools (Ghana Education Service, 2002).

In 2000, Ghana was among the 187 countries that became signatories to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a UN strategy with eight development objectives (Atta, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2003). The goals focus on strategies to eliminate poverty, achieve universal basic education, empower women and promote gender equality, reduce infant mortality, promote maternal health, reduce the spread of malaria and HIV/AIDS, promote environmental sustainability, and develop a global partnership for development (Ministry of Education, 2003; United Nations [UN], 2015). A crucial step towards achieving the MDGs is educational reforms because education is essential to reducing poverty, improving maternal health, decreasing infant mortality, reducing the spread of Malaria and HIV/AIDS, and engaging in safe environmental practices.

The World Education Forum organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 also affirmed the commitment of countries in Africa to work at making equal rights to education a reality (Atta, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2010; Rolleston, 2011). Although the forum encouraged the participants to remain committed to the MDGs target date of 2015 for achieving universal basic education and gender equity (Rolleston, 2011), many African countries continue to struggle in making basic education a reality for all children.

In 2015, reports by UNICEF indicated Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest proportion of countries with gender parity in education. Only two out of 35 countries in the region had achieved gender parity, that is, girls' gross enrolment ratio as a proportion of boys' gross enrolment ratio (UNICEF, 2015). In Nigeria and Ethiopia, over one million girls of school age do not attend school (UNESCO, 2013). Table 1.2 shows how far behind the female population in Africa is in educational attainment.

Table 1.2

*African Countries with the Lowest Female Education*

The percentage of the poorest females aged 7-16 who have never been to school			Average years of education for the poorest females aged 17-22		
Rank	Country	%	Rank	Country	Years
1	Somalia	95%	1	Somalia	0.3
2	Niger	78%	2	Niger	0.4
3	Liberia	77%	3	Mali	0.5
4	Mali	75%	4	Guinea	0.5
5	Burkina Faso	71%	5	Guinea-Bissau	0.8
6	Guinea	68%	6	Central African Republic	0.8
7	Benin	55%	7	Burkina Faso	0.9
8	Cote d'Ivoire	52%	8	Benin	1.1

*Note.* From United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2013, p. 4)

The evidence of what is going on in other African countries, as displayed in the above table, provides a broader context for investigating why Ghana failed to achieve the MDG for gender equity in education by the 2015 set date.

After the Millennium Declaration and the World Education Forum, Ghana's renewed interest in promoting equal opportunity and eliminating gender inequity resulted in the 2003-2015 Education Strategic Plan (Adamu-Issah, Elden, Forson, & Schrofer, 2007; Atta, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2003). The Early Childhood Education (2004), Capitation Grant Scheme (2005), the School Feeding Programme (2005), and the Free Uniforms Programme (2009) are policies and programmes articulated under Ghana's education plan (Ministry of Education, 2012). The Early Childhood Education initiative targets the establishment of daycare programmes, centres, and schools where parents can send their children while at work (Ministry of Education, 2012), is aimed at improving learning outcomes for children, and allows older siblings, especially girls, to attend school instead of providing care for younger siblings (Adamu-Issah et al., 2007). The Capitation Grant Scheme (CGS) involves the abolition of school fees

(Akyeampong, 2011). Under CGS, the government pays a standard fee of USD 1.21 per pupil for the academic year so that public schools can provide all children with access to a full cycle of basic education (Adamu-Issah et al., 2007; Ministry of Education, 2012). The objective of CGS is to sustain attendance and allow out-of-school children back into the education system (Akyeampong, 2011). The School Feeding Programme allocates grants to public schools to provide quality meals for primary school students (Ministry of Education, 2012). The uniforms initiative led to the distribution of school uniforms to children from underprivileged communities in Ghana (Ministry of Education, 2012). All these programmes demonstrate Ghana's commitment to universal primary education.

While the government was introducing policy initiatives and programmes, the 2010 sector performance report by the Ministry of Education revealed that Ghana missed the national primary Gender Parity Index (GPI) target for the initial set date of 2005. The GPI is the ratio of girls' gross enrolment ratio as a proportion of boys' gross enrolment ratio (Ministry of Education Report, 2015). Although the target was 100% completion for both boys and girls for 2004/2005, the academic year report indicated that 68.10% females and 77.30% males completed schooling at the end of the full cycle for basic education (Ministry of Education Report, 2010, p. 53). Table 1.3 is a collation of data for the girls' gross enrolment ratio as a proportion of boys' gross enrolment ratio and completion rates from 2004 to 2010.

Table 1.3

*Gender Parity and Completion Rates of Basic Education from 2004-2010*

Indicators/Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Enrolment Primary Total	3,077,489	3,111,753	3,473,229	3,622,724	3,710,647	3,809,258
Primary Female Enrolment Rate	84.40%	88.80%	91.60%	93.00%	92.79%	93.03%
Primary Male Enrolment Rate	90.50%	95.30%	95.80%	97.30%	96.97%	96.7%
Primary Female Completion Rate	75.10%	72.40%	79.60%	82.40%	85.50%	84.30%
Primary Male Completion Rate	82.30%	78.70%	91.20%	88.90%	74.00%	89.70%
Enrolment Junior High Total	1,048,367	1,121,887	1,170,801	1,224,964	1,285,577	1,301,940
Junior High Female Enrolment Rate	68.10%	76.30%	73.70%	75.30%	76.93%	76.3%
Junior High Male Enrolment Rate	77.30%	83.50%	80.90%	82.20%	84.05%	82.5%
Junior High Female Completion Rate	55.00%	74.70%	60.00%	62.90%	70.10%	61.80%
Junior High Male Completion Rate	60.00%	81.20%	69.80%	72.40%	79.70%	70.10%

*Note.* From Ghana's Ministry of Education Reports (2010; 2013)

Ten years after missing the initial target date of 2005, Ghana was still struggling to achieve a 100% completion rate for males and females. Based on recent reports by the Ministry of Education (2015), girls' enrolment in public primary schools remained unchanged from 2005 enrolments. Table 1.4 provides collated statistics from 2010 to 2015.

Table 1.4

*Gender Parity and Completion Rates of Basic Education from 2010-2015*

Indicators/Year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Target-2015
Enrolment Primary total	3,962,779	4,062,026	4,105,913	4,117,152	4,342,315	
Primary Female Enrolment Rate	94.7%	94.9%	104.5%	106.7%	110.4%	
Primary Male Enrolment Rate	98.4%	97.9%	105.5%	108.0%	110.4%	
Primary Female Completion Rate	89%	91.9%	111.0%	95.9%	98.5%	100%
Primary Male Completion Rate	94.1%	95.5%	113.8%	99.0%	100.8%	100%
Enrolment Junior High total	1,335,400	1,385,367	1,452,585	1,473,921	1,591,279	
Junior High Female Enrolment Rate	76.4%	78.1%	79.2%	80.0%	83.6%	
Junior High Male Enrolment Rate	82.6%	83%	85.2%	84.0%	87.1%	
Junior High Female Completion Rate	62.8%	63.0%	65.3%	65.8%	70.6%	100%
Junior High Male Completion Rate	70.9%	70.4%	74.9%	72.0%	76.4%	100%

*Note.* From Ghana's Ministry of Education Reports (2012; 2013; 2015)

Compared with primary school completion rates (98% females versus 100% males), junior high completion rates show a larger discrepancy (70.6% females versus 76.4% males) (Ministry of Education Report, 2015, p. 21). Unsurprisingly, girls' low retention rates correspond with low completion rates of girls at the final level of basic education. The completion rate reported by Ghana's Ministry of Education includes data from both the private and public sector, but the ministry does not provide separate completion rates for private and public schools. Due to the merged reports for completion rates in private and public schools, it is difficult to determine the impact of basic education policies and practices for the beneficiaries of the public school system. Table 1.5 below provides information about girls' enrolment in private and public basic

schools, but the report by Ghana's Ministry for Education (2015) does not include data on separate completion rates for the private and public sector respectively.

Table 1.5

*Basic Education National Enrolment Profile – 2014/2015 School Year Data*

	Public			Private		
	Total	Female	%F	Total	Female	%F
Crèche/Nursery	14,182	7,154	50.4%	320,217	158,971	49.6%
Kindergarten (KG)	1,285,479	637,837	49.6%	481,236	239,930	49.6%
Primary	3,244,997	1,579,517	48.7%	1,097,318	546,614	49.8%
Junior High School (JHS)	1,240,416	590,907	47.6%	350,863	177,850	50.7%
Total	5,785,074	2,815,415	48.7%	2,249,634	1,112,365	49.9%

*Note.* From Ghana's Ministry of Education Report (2015)

As shown in Table 1.5, most female students at the basic level are enrolled in public schools, which constitute the highest proportion of overall national enrolment (2,815,415). As the girls in public schools move from the lowest level (Crèche/Nursery) to Junior High School, there is a drop from 50.4% in enrolment to 47.6% (Ministry of Education, 2015). Compared to the private sector, girls' enrolment slightly increases from 49.6% in the Crèche/Nursery level to 50.7% in the Junior High School level (Ministry of Education, 2015). Unsurprisingly, children in public schools have a lower socioeconomic status than their private school counterparts, as their parents cannot afford private education (Ministry of Education, 2015). Girls in public school are more likely to drop out and fail to complete basic education, as seen in the consistent drop in the number of female students enrolled in public school as they move to higher levels.

As we have seen in Ghana's school completion rates, despite the government's policies and programmes, far fewer women than men are educated. Other reports support these data. For example, recent findings from the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS) reveal 24.3% of

females have never attended school compared to 14.6% of males (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The GLSS further noted that the gender gap was more significant in the case of attainment of post-secondary or higher education – 18.0% of males compared to 11.8% females (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). If girls are not able to complete basic education, they certainly cannot aspire to attain secondary or tertiary education. Women’s low education completion rates have consequences for the country’s economy, more so because women outnumber men by 2.7% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). In a 2013 report, the African Development Bank indicated that women’s low education completion and literacy rates were hindering the country’s efforts to reduce poverty. Clearly, the education policies and practices designed to attain gender equity have not generated the desired outcomes in Ghana. The question is why? This study aims to examine the reasons and explanations for the failure of the Ghanaian government's education policies and practices in achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of gender equity in basic education.

#### **1.4.1 Research Questions.**

The research study addresses the following fundamental questions.

1. How have current education policies and practices influenced girls’ enrolment and completion rates?
2. What are the perceptions and experiences of policy administrators, educators, and parents regarding gender inequity in basic education in Ghana?
3. What do these perceptions and experiences reveal about how education policies, programmes, and practices can be enhanced so that school retention and completion rates of girls improve?



### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Several scholars (Atta, 2015; Dei, 2005; MacBeath, 2010; Pola, 2008; Jones & Chant, 2009; Porter et al., 2011; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004; Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008; Stromquist, 1990) have written about education in Ghana, but few have focused specifically on the gender disparities in public schools at the basic level after the 2015 target date for the MDGs. This research study will fill this gap in the literature by exploring the experiences of policy administrators, educators, and parents regarding the gender inequity at basic schools through individual interviews and focus group discussions. Exploring the perspectives of stakeholders will clarify why the current policies are not resulting in gender equity in basic education and produce an alternative knowledge that is relevant to the principles of inclusion (Collins, 1989).

This thesis reviews all of Ghana's education policies and practices targeted at attaining gender equity at all levels of education by 2015. All these policies and practices are outlined in Ghana's Education Strategic Plan. This review is critical if Ghana is going to work towards the global goals articulated by the UN. This study aims to help shape reform in Ghana's public education sector and to bring about significant changes during the next phase of MDGs, which are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs was adopted by world leaders at the UN summit on September 25, 2015, to build on the MDGs and complete the objectives that were not achieved (UN, 2015). The insights from the study, it is hoped, will ignite debates among policymakers, educational administrators, educators, parents, intellectuals, foreign donors, and global agencies to consider country-specific frameworks for development instead of the global standards that ignore the varied local contexts in African countries.

## **1.6 Definitions of Key Terms**

Formal education is defined here as the “planned and systemic training given in an institution of learning” (Offorma, 2009, p. 1). Formal education involves learning in an organized and structured context and may lead to the award of a certificate as formal recognition (Owu-Ewie, 2006). Basic education, according to Ghana’s Ministry of Education (2012), entails “two years of kindergarten, six years of primary school and three years of junior high school” (p. 14). As per Ghana’s constitution, basic education is free and compulsory and receives the highest priority of all education sub-sectors (Adamu-Issah et al., 2007). The set target by the United Nations and Ghana as a member country is 100% completion rate for male and female students at the basic level by 2005 and at all levels of education by 2015 (Adamu-Issah et al., 2007).

This research study focuses on girls as a gender category. A girl is defined here as a female biological offspring from birth to the age of 18 years (Offorma, 2009). During this period, the girl-child is under the care of adults who may be her parents, guardians, or older siblings. Therefore, the girl-child is dependent on significant others (parents, guardians, or older siblings) for her physical, mental, social, spiritual, and emotional development (Offorma, 2009).

Gender equity refers to “the treatment of people according to their respective needs to ensure equal rights, obligations and opportunities” (Council for International Development, 2012, p. 1). Considering that the study focused on exploring the differences in completion rates of girls and boys in basic schools, the term gender equity as used in this context includes numerical (proportional) equality. Gender equity takes into consideration the different strengths and weaknesses people are born with and demands that stakeholders adopt different actions accordingly (Council for International Development, 2012). Critics argue that there is a subjective understanding regarding the needs of people and the required plan for achieving

equity (Council for International Development, 2012). This limitation makes gender equity useful to this study because gender is socially constructed and not universal (Ravelli & Webber, 2016). The needs of people are subjective and must be evaluated based on how every society defines gender and gender expectations.

Those who support gender equality advocate for the same treatment for people by calling for the removal of the limitations set by stereotypes (Council for International Development, 2012). Gender equality, which entails the demand for the same treatment, must be considered in the context of culture. In Ghana, ethnic diversity determines gender expectations for the various groups. Therefore, the experiences of girls and women are not the same, but they are subjective based on their ethnicity (ethnic culture), geographical location (region), and religious affiliation (Christian, Islamic or Traditional).

### **1.7 Research Summary and Thesis Structure**

The study uses document analysis (government reports, journal articles, books, and census data) and qualitative methods including interviews, and focus group discussions. Participants were recruited from the Ghana Education Service and two public schools in the Tema Metropolitan Area of Ghana. I used purposive sampling to select the respondents because parents, policy administrators, and educators have different but vital perspectives on the impact of policy on gender and educational attainment. Twenty-four participants, including educators, policy administrators, and parents, responded to the interview questions and participated in focus group discussions. The transcript of the research data was analyzed using content analysis.

The participants' responses were coded and grouped into three thematic categories. These categories include socio-cultural, economic, and political factors. According to the responses of the policy administrators and educators, socio-cultural factors such as early marriage, teenage

pregnancy, the preference for sons, broken homes, sexual harassment and traditional cultural practices, represent barriers to gender equity in basic education. The socio-cultural challenges are exacerbated by economic impediments like parental poverty, the lack of school textbooks and teaching materials, girls engaging in paid labour to augment family income, poor school infrastructure, and inadequate school resources. Parents from the focus group believe that the gender inequity in basic education in Ghana is a result of political interference such as the politicization of education policy, discontinuation of education policies, partisan politics, and the lack of political will to fund education programmes. Consequently, local politics negatively affect girls' schooling as parents favour educating their male children when family resources are scarce. The intersecting sources that influence gender inequity in public education at the basic level are socio-cultural barriers, economic challenges, and politics.

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter one, the introduction, discusses the research theme, the researcher's position and the approach guiding the study, the purpose and significance of the study, and the research questions. It also defines key terms. Chapter two entails a critical review of existing literature and the contributions of various scholars on the issue of gender inequity in education in Africa. Chapter three provides a detailed analysis of Black Feminist Thought and highlights how the framework complements the goal of harnessing the diverse experiences of girls to justify the need for policymakers to use life experiences as sources of alternative knowledge that can promote inclusion. Chapter four describes the methodology for the study, which includes the research design and methods, participant selection and data collection, data transcription, coding and analysis and ethical considerations. Fieldwork challenges and study limitations are also discussed. Chapter five presents the research results and themes that emerged from the responses of the participants. Chapter six lays out a detailed

discussion and analysis of the study's findings and elaborates on the relevance of the findings to the existing literature and the theoretical approach to the study. Chapter seven provides answers to the research questions and offers an intersectional analysis of study findings. I also discuss the research contributions and situate the results within the theoretical orientation of the study. Chapter eight, the conclusion, summarizes the research study and critical arguments of the findings, provides reflections, insights, policy recommendations, and implications for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the existing literature about gender inequity in education. By drawing on published books and journal articles related to formal education and gender in sub-Saharan Africa, this chapter situates the research study within important scholarly debates. The existing literature was identified through electronic searches using concepts and phrases such as “education policies and gender in Africa,” “history of education in Ghana,” “MDGs and Ghana,” and “barriers to girls’ education in Ghana.” Studies directly related to basic education, gender, formal education, MDGs, and universal basic education in West Africa were reviewed. A comparative study of education policies and gender in West Africa was considered along with studies that made specific reference to cases in Ghana, which were given priority.

The research literature falls into three general schools of thought. The first explains gender inequity in education through a post-colonial theoretical lens. The post-colonial theory is critical of western assumptions and concepts in the analysis of non-western and colonized contexts. Scholars using the post-colonial theory to analyze gender and formal education argue that European ideologies like Victorian values and Christianity worked to exclude girls from the formal education that was offered during the colonial era (Eyiah, 2004; MacBeath, 2010). The second school of thought situates the continuing gender inequity in participation and completion of basic education within the global frameworks for development. Global economic reform programmes led to the redefinition of the state’s role and a retreat in the provision of social services including education (Jones & Chant, 2009; Porter et al., 2011; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). As a result, in the post-colonial era, governments struggled to expand educational facilities to include girls (Jones & Chant, 2009; Porter et al., 2011). The third

perspective situates gender inequity in education within the context of a range of socio-cultural factors, including patriarchal family structures, lineage systems, and marriage. Feminist frameworks are used to explain the low educational attainment of girls in West Africa by showing how, through patriarchal family structures, lineage systems, and marriage, traditional male epistemologies dominate everyday societal practices and work to the disadvantage of females in Ghanaian society (Acker, 1987; Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008).

## **2.2 Colonialism and Gender Inequity in Education**

Colonialism introduced a new system under European administrators that promoted European civilization to the natives and trained people for the economic exploitation of local resources (Etse, 2014). The European values promulgated by the colonial rulers impacted African tradition, including indigenous education, customary laws, and traditional religion (Ranger, 1993). Before the colonizers introduced formal education in Ghana, Ghanaians operated an informal system of education that prepared their members for citizenship (Eyiah, 2004; MacBeath, 2010).

Traditional education took the form of oral teaching (Eyiah, 2004; MacBeath, 2010). Indigenous Ghanaian education took place in the home, and the teachers were the parents and the elders in the family (MacBeath, 2010). The curriculum of indigenous education was life and learning through observation (Eyiah, 2004). According to McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975), the primary purpose of indigenous education was the inculcation of good character and good health into the young members of the community. The second purpose was to pass along adequate knowledge of the history, beliefs, and culture to enable young people to participate fully in social life (Eyiah, 2004).

A core argument of the post-colonial framework is the view that the education system in Ghana is reproducing gender inequity through the adoption of a system inherited from colonial

rule. Consequently, Ghana's education continues to reflect the influence of colonialists' Eurocentric values: Victorian ideas about girls and the subordinate position of women within Christian doctrines (Dei, 2005). Through colonial rule and missionary work, the Europeans established a foreign concept of education. Formal education started as a form of language training because colonialists sought to educate young Ghanaians to serve as the communication link between the Europeans and natives (Eyiah, 2004; MacBeath, 2010). European merchants and missionaries were interested in using native Ghanaians as interpreters to promote trade activities and spread the gospel (MacBeath, 2010). Colonialists intended to produce local educated people to work as storekeepers and clerks in commerce, industry, and government (Adu-Agyem & Osei-Poku, 2012). Under colonial expansion plans, basic infrastructures such as roads, rails, and mines (MacBeath, 2010; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004) would also require basic education for labourers.

To meet their needs, European merchants and missionaries in Ghana created a colonial education system that promoted gender inequity in three significant ways: through the structure of the educational system, curricular content, and geographical considerations, all associated with commercial interest (MacBeath, 2010). First, education was structured in such a way that girls were largely excluded. Although the colonialists were interested in educating local men to play a role in the workforce and to act as guides and translators (Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004), they had no intention of doing the same for women. For example, only Ghanaian males would be educated to be labourers (Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). Thus, few girls attended school in colonial Ghana until the 1960s after Ghana gained independence (Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004).



Another area that created gender inequity was the curriculum. Colonial schools used the curriculum to promote Eurocentric ideals and undermine traditional African thought (MacBeath, 2010; Thompson, 2002). In addition to encompassing Christian doctrines, part of the basic training, the curriculum reflected the colonialists' Victorian values about girls and reinforced the subordination of women, (MacBeath, 2010; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). Missionary activities operated parallel to colonial governance (MacBeath, 2010). Scriptures from the bible formed a large part of the curriculum and were used to indoctrinate pupils in Christianity (MacBeath, 2010; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). In a study of how Western male hegemony enters the school through subjects such as religion in Botswana, Chilisa and Ntseane (2010) emphasized how the curriculum entrenched gender inequity in school. In their data collection, which included the children's voices on experiences of gender violence in primary and Junior Secondary Schools, "the boys said that the females should be at home because if God wanted females to be leaders, He would have made the first woman to be a leader. The first person - Adam was a man. The woman was made from the rib of Adam, and even Jesus was a male" (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010, p. 627). Still, today in Ghana and other African states, Religious and Moral Education (RME) and Christian Religious Studies are core subject requirements for the Basic Education Certificate Examination and the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (Clark, 2015). The continuous indoctrination of students through Christian principles emphasizes the subordination of girls and women.

In addition to structure and the curriculum, geography has created inequities. The location of colonial schools has hindered education for girls in some regions and, in fact, for some boys as well (Tanye, 2008). Because most of Ghana's natural resources are in southern regions, colonialists created a southern bias in the establishment of schools (Tanye, 2008). The

quest for natural resource appropriation thus weakened educational facilities in the northern regions (Tanye, 2008). The reports by the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS) has confirmed the spatial inequalities in education. In the 2014 report of the GLSS, northern Ghana recorded the lowest number of individuals with formal training (with 49.2% of males and 28.6% females) compared to other regions (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The population in the areas of the north of Ghana, especially the females, record the lowest rate in basic education attainment because so few co-educational institutions exist in this location (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014; Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008).

Upon examination, it is obvious that the structure, curriculum, and even the location of the first formal schools in Ghana's education was guided by the exploitative agenda of colonialists, Victorian values about girls, and the subordination of women in Christian doctrines (Dei, 2005; MacBeath, 2010; Pola, 2008; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2010). The anti-colonial lens suggests that proposed education policy and programmes to eliminate gender gaps must rely on local knowledge as a source for decolonization (Dei, 2005). However, when male values dominate local epistemologies, as in Ghana, then the educational policies and practices adopt a paternalistic approach that results in exclusion rather than being inclusive.

Critical arguments about the exclusion of girls from colonial education suggest the patriarchal nature of Ghanaian society continues to subordinate women in the post-colonial era (MacBeath, 2010; Pola, 2008; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004; Tanye, 2008). However, it is important to emphasize that the indigenous education interrupted by colonialism aimed at promoting good character and the teaching of traditional beliefs and culture (Eyiah, 2004) and prepared men and women for complementary gender roles. When education changed under the colonial government, girls and women were excluded from education, resulting in gender-

segregated work, where girls and women dominated the domestic space with minimal participation in the public sphere (MacBeath, 2010; Pola, 2008; Tanye, 2008). The neglect of girls and women in formal education introduced by the colonialists to promote European commercial enterprises deepened the gender inequity, hence contributing to the lower educational attainment for girls in Ghana.

During the post-independence era, educational reforms such as the Accelerated Development Plan (1961), the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (1987), the Girls Education Unit (1997), Early Childhood Education (2004), the Capitation Grant (2005), the School Feeding Programme (2005), and the School Uniforms Initiative (2009) were introduced (Akyeampong, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2012; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Despite these policies, Akyeampong (2009) argues that “Ghana produced slower growth in education, with a third of primary school-age children out of school, and the clear majority of them were from poor, rural backgrounds and were mostly girls” (p. 176). The gender discrimination created by the colonial schooling system was problematic because the old system’s legacy carried forward and hindered the post-colonial regime’s capacity to deliver the Western ideologies of national development.

The post-colonial theory provides a framework for interrogating issues of formal education in Africa. The post-colonial approach as noted by Dei (2005), is “largely focused on the interconnections between imperial or colonial cultures and the colonized cultural practices and the constructions of hybridity and alterity” (p. 272). Post-colonialism emphasizes the complexities and disjuncture that exist in the colonial experience and the post-colonial encounter (Dei, 2005). These complexities and disjuncture include policies and practices that use conformist strategies for development and ignore the varied local context that is relevant for

national growth. Most former colonies have failed to experience real progress after attaining independence from colonial rulers.

As Dei (2005) suggests, post-colonial theory must attempt to incorporate anti-colonial discursive frameworks to adequately address the current state of gender inequity in education in Ghana. For Dei (2005), the anti-colonial prism explores the nature and extent of social domination, the multiple places of power, and the manifestation of power relations to establish dominant-subordinate ties. The anti-colonial framework has roots in the decolonizing movements of former European colonies and helps to address the limitations of post-colonial theory by advocating for an inclusive education that is better able to respond to the varied local concerns regarding formal education (Dei, 2005). Advocating for an inclusive education means that government, intellectuals, educators, foreign donors, global agencies, and other stakeholders must acknowledge that “colonizing practices can be unending and deeply embedded in everyday relations” (Dei, 2005, p. 273). Within an anti-colonial discursive approach, local or indigenous knowledge serves as a source of daily resistance and the pursuit of active political practice to change all forms of dominance (Dei, 2005). Although Dei (2005) offers an effective approach for dealing with the relics of colonialism in Ghana’s education system, indigenous knowledge used as resistance must represent the views of girls and women and not the opinions of those with a political mandate. Considering the low representation of women in political and social institutions in Ghana (Addo, 2012; MacBeth, 2010) and the dominance of men, resorting to local ways of resistance to the colonial legacy might lead to a paternalistic approach that excludes the voices of women.

### **2.3 Globalization and Gender Differences in Education**

The discussion on the theories of globalization for gender differences in education in Ghana will adopt a critical approach (Bartelson, 2000; Kuyini, 2013). The theories of globalization serve to highlight the micro and macro contexts perpetuating gender inequity in education. The macro context concerns the implications of global developmental frameworks, including the neoliberal economic restructuring like Structural Adjustment and its support for privatization and cuts in social services including education (Jones & Chant, 2009; Porter et al., 2011; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). Consequently, families with scarce resources cannot afford to educate both boys and girls because of the post-colonial government's retreat in providing free universal basic education. In this section, I discuss some of the global frameworks for development and their socioeconomic impact on the national level.

Arguments within critical theoretical approaches to globalization suggest that economic restructuring programmes prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank as solutions to debt servicing have crippled many African governments (Jones & Chant, 2009; Porter et al., 2011; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). The IMF and the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were an economic remedy designed to devalue currency, decrease inflation, reduce the size of the public service, reduce government spending on health, education and to promote privatization of public enterprises and export (Konadu-Agyemang, 2000). The microeconomic implications of the SAP were the massive retrenchment of public sector workers, unprecedented cuts in state expenditures on public services and social welfare, and the introduction of user fees for health and education (Konadu-Agyemang, 2000). As a result of this reduction in government spending, most African governments are neither able

to allocate enough budget for social programmes nor distribute resources to expand education to include girls (Jones & Chant, 2009; Porter et al., 2011; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004).

During the 1980s, Ghana adopted the SAP resulting in a 20% decrease in real spending on primary education between 1990 and 1994 (Akyeampong, 2009; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). The situation led to an increase in charges for school uniforms, books, and levies for school building projects (Akyeampong, 2009; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). Consequently, although access to basic education is a constitutional mandate, Ghana was not able to provide free universal basic education (Jones & Chant, 2009; Porter et al., 2011; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004; Tanye, 2008). Due to macroeconomic weakness and scarce resources, the cost of education was shifted to parents (Jones & Chant, 2009; Porter et al., 2011; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004).

Factoring into the decisions to favour the education of sons are pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare. Teenage girls are often required to care for younger siblings at home, and since most girls are required to focus on domestic affairs, parents often decide that they should drop out of school (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Atta, 2015). Daughters may also be expected to augment the family's resources by participating in the paid workforce (Alderman & King, 1998; Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Atta, 2015). Unsurprisingly, then, the economic crisis has had more impact on girls as families experiencing financial difficulties cannot afford to educate both sons and daughters (Jones & Chant, 2009; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). These parental decisions to focus on the schooling of sons at the expense of daughters result in gender differences in the outcome of schooling.

Besides being denied educational opportunities due to parental choice, women continue to contribute to their family income given the unstable domestic economy (Kanji, Kanji & Manji,

1991). Despite the lower education among women and the cultural notion that men are the breadwinners of the family in Ghana, 50.5% of females are income contributing family members compared to 41.9% of males (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The high levels of unemployment caused by privatization continue to burden women with lower education and low paying jobs because they must strive to support their families. With women having lower education and the pressure on girls to augment family income due to cultural gender expectations, they tend to sacrifice further education for engaging in a variety of paid labour and suffer more than boys do in the process (Kanji et al., 1991; Alderman & King, 1998; Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009).

One reason why girls discontinue their schooling is the time they must spend travelling from home to school. Ghana has not been able to expand its transportation system, although the distance to school is one of the major deterrents to educational prospects and attainment for girls (Alderman & King, 1998; Porter et al., 2011). Unterhalter and North (2011) claim that one reason for insufficient transportation infrastructure is that the agenda for global development has not kept in touch with the politics and practice of local governments. Exacerbating the transportation problems is parents' reluctance to ask their girls to walk long distances to school. In a Ghanaian case study, Porter et al. (2011) reported that parents hesitate to grant girls permission to walk long distances or take unsafe routes to get to school. Thus, as Porter et al. (2011) suggest, the absence of neighbourhood schools and large distances between home and school negatively affects the enrolment of girls more than that of boys.

As well as distance from school, other factors have contributed to gender inequity in Ghanaian basic education, particularly girls' irregular attendance and their high dropout rate (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009). Factors that deter children's commitment and learning include poor school infrastructure and services (Porter et al., 2011; Tanye, 2008), low incentives for

teachers, who may not be motivated to encourage girls to stay in school, and poor school resources. Finally, girls may be discouraged because they are exhausted from providing care for younger siblings and engaging in domestic chores (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Canagarajah & Coulombe, 1997).

The globalization framework reveals that SAP implementation has led to gender discrimination due to the decline in the economic capacity of African governments and families (Jones & Chant, 2009; Porter et al., 2011; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004; Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Jones and Chant (2009) propose a macro to micro-strategy for addressing the gender difference in education. The macro-strategy entails the need for international bodies like the United Nations and the World Bank to work to determine the real income decline of nations in sub-Saharan Africa that contributes to the depreciation of per-capita income (Jones & Chant, 2009). A turn around in real income would remove the institutional constraints caused by global economic policies for Africa's development (Jones & Chant, 2009). In terms of the micro-strategy for addressing gender differences in education, Jones and Chant (2009) suggest policy initiatives should focus on ensuring that rights to food, housing, and health care are guaranteed if there is to be any change in the current parental strategies, which often discriminate against girls' in educational opportunities. As suggested by Jones and Chant (2009) the redistribution of resources to the most impoverished homes in Ghana would help to minimize parental decision which favour boys compared to girls regarding formal educational opportunities.

Several African governments, including Ghana, are in a semi-patronage relationship with international financial institutions that hold the ability to reward incumbent governments that adhere to the global development agenda and withdraw support from non-compliant



governments (Bartelson, 2000; Morley, Leach & Lugg, 2009; Salih, 2005). For example, the Girls Education Unit (GEU), a sub-unit in Ghana's Ministry of Education, was initially funded by external agencies like the World Bank and UNICEF (Ghana Education Service, 2002). In case of donor funding were to cease following the global development agenda, the unit would have faced challenges. In fact, the entire public education sector, especially basic education, is vulnerable because it is heavily funded by external donors. Table 2.1 provides evidence for the reliance of Ghana's education sector on donor funding.

Table 2.1

*Expenditure by Level of Education from Other Sources (2012)*

Level	ABFA		GETfund		IGF		Donor	
	Amount	%	Amount	%	Amount	%	Total	%
Pre-school	1,057,128	10%	4,255,924	1%	0	0%	10,819,016	9%
Primary	6,342,769	60%	32,285,545	9%	0	0%	62,502,375	55%
JHS	3,171,385	30%	17,267,772	5%	0	0%	29,245,113	26%
SHS	0	0%	84,688,975	23%	216,777,814	34%	1,792,059	2%
TVET	0	0%	28,075,579	8%	92,904,777	15%	158,247	0%
SPED	0	0%	3,713,355	1%	0	0%	335,707	0%
NFED	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Tertiary	0	0%	101,619,956	28%	313,794,857	50%	7,244,612	6%
Management & Subvented	0	0%	89,372,122	25%	7,196,749	1%	2,214,552	2%

<sup>18</sup>Donor spending includes AfDB, DfID, IDA, JICA, UNICEF, DANIDA and USAID.

*Note.* From the Government of Ghana, Education Sector Performance Report (2013, p. 102)

Pre-school, primary, and Junior High School (JHS) together constitute a basic education in Ghana. Table 2.1 reveals that 90% of basic education's funding comes from donors. Donors, as indicated in Ghana's Ministry of Education (2012) report, include the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department for International Development (DfID), and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). Ghana's failure to adhere to the demands of global economic partnerships could lead to a retreat in donor support

and foreign aid. In response to the power imbalance associated with external funding, 35 donors and 57 partner countries, including Ghana signed an aid effectiveness declaration in Paris in March 2005 (Addae-Boahene, 2015). The Paris declaration promoted aid responds to poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs (Addae-Boahene, 2015). Five partnership commitments were designed to guide donor funding to achieve poverty reduction and the MDGs (Addae-Boahene, 2015). These commitments include ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability (Addae-Boahene, 2015). As discussed in this section, the universal ideas about development, ignoring local specificities in developing countries and excluding the cultural experiences that define the lives of people in non-western countries reiterate the need for ownership, policy alignment, harmonization frameworks, results management and mutual accountability. Thus, it is crucial to situate globalization within the context of colonial relations, and the imbalance power relationships that characterize imperialism.

## **2.4 Cultural Norms and Gender Differences in Educational Attainment**

This section addresses the contribution of feminist frameworks in advancing educational opportunities for girls and women. These frameworks include liberal feminism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism. The aim is to explore how these frameworks explain gender inequity in education and ways to achieve inclusion.

The socio-cultural norms serving as barriers to girls' education are the units of analysis for feminist frameworks. According to Acker (1987), feminist theory addresses "the question of women's subordination to men: how it arose, how and why it is perpetuated, how it might be changed and (sometimes) what life would be like without it" (p. 421). Feminist theory serves to provide an understanding of gender inequity as well as a guide to action (Acker, 1987). For

gender inequity in education, Tanye (2008) and Tuwor and Sossou (2008) have adopted the theoretical frameworks of liberal feminism and radical feminism. Socialist feminism provides an additional foundation for explaining the ways that cultural ideologies and economic segregation discriminate against girls and women in education.

Liberal feminism focuses on building connections among all women, so they advocate for equal access to resources in society (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). Those who support liberal feminism advocate for reforms like “legal equality between the sexes, equal pay for equal work, and equal employment opportunities” (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 776). The liberal feminist framework for education supports equal opportunities as well as the removal of barriers in schools that prevent girls from reaching their full potential (Acker, 1987). Acker (1987) notes that the conceptual foundation for liberal feminist educational scholarship consists of three areas: socialization, sex stereotyping and sex discrimination, and equal opportunities. Socialization and sex stereotyping and sex discrimination tend to condition girls to perceive marriage and motherhood as a natural role (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Consequently, it becomes a challenge to access equal opportunity and to pursue higher education (Acker, 1987; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008).

According to Tuwor and Sossou (2008), the internalization of sex-discrimination, cultural norms and stereotypes of girls shape and condition their beliefs about themselves and their responses and behaviours to change. In Ghana, cultural norms emphasize motherhood as a natural role for females. As a result, girls tend to privilege marriage and childbearing over education (Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Although Ghana’s cultural norms place less value on girls’ education, Tuwor and Sossou (2008) claim that lower school enrolment for girls is due to the economic success of the illiterate and semi-illiterate female traders popularly known

as market-women in West Africa. Most girls tend to believe they do not need formal education for economic prosperity (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008).

Liberal feminism posits that the best strategies for advancing gender equity in education are altering socialization, changing attitudes, and using legal processes (Acker, 1987). Tuwor and Sossou (2008) argue that strategies can only work if “programmes and policies to improve the situation of girls and women in West Africa must scrupulously reflect the principle that biological differences should not lead to social inequalities” (p. 372). Acker (1987) suggests that attitudes might begin to change if teachers were trained to handle sexism effectively. The conception and spread of sexism are rooted in the representations of women in textbooks as mothers, wives, and low-status workers (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Therefore, the Ghanaian government and other countries in the West African sub-region must work on tackling the issue of sexism in basic education.

The focus of radical feminism is gender oppression and calling for restructured social institutions (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). Radical feminism argues that the systematic marginalization of women is the fundamental form of inequality, so there is a need for a fundamental change in social structures (Acker, 1987; Campbell & Wasco, 2000). Radical feminism proposes eliminating male dominance and patriarchal structures in society (Acker, 1987). “Denying girls and women full access to knowledge, resources, self-esteem, and freedom from fear and harassment” reproduces male dominance (Acker, 1987, p. 429). Two areas of concern raised by radical feminist educational scholars are “the male monopolization of culture and knowledge; and the sexual politics of everyday life in schools” (Acker, 1987, p. 429). Tanye (2008) and Tuwor and Sossou (2008) emphasize the roles of sexual politics and patriarchy in keeping girls out of school and their education completion rates low. As Tuwor and Sossou

(2008) argue, these educational disadvantages are rooted in “patriarchal systems of social organization and other socio-cultural practices including early marriage, child labour, poverty, and multiple household duties, and a lack of economic and social opportunities” (p. 364).

The effect of patrilineal lineage systems on girls and women in West Africa is emphasized in the literature (Kutsoati & Morck, 2014; Siegel, 1996; Takyi & Gyimah, 2007). The patrilineal system, which views marriage as man-to-woman, promotes male dominance and power over the woman (Takyi & Gyimah, 2007). In Ghana, lineage systems and other traditional cultural practices are tools men use to control girls and women; these practices include traditional systems of inheritance, and the payment of a bride price (Tanye, 2008). Except for the Akan-speaking ethnic group, which practices matrilineal lineage systems, all ethnic groups in Ghana use patrilineal lineage systems. Children within the patrilineal system trace their lineage through their father (Kutsoati & Morck, 2014; Siegel, 1996). Within this system, male children are more valued than female children because they continue the family name and legacy (Kutsoati & Morck, 2014; Siegel, 1996). Because of the power and prestige attached to male children among patrilineal groups, they inherit all properties (both fixed and moveable) belonging to their father based on local customs and practices (Kutsoati & Morck, 2014; Siegel, 1996). Even the matrilineal system has patrilineal features. Although children in the matrilineal system trace their lineage through their mothers, property and inheritance are mostly the prerogatives of males (La Ferrara & Milazzo, 2017; Takyi & Gyimah, 2007). Females may inherit moveable properties from their mothers, but only males inherit fixed properties such as lands and houses belonging to their mother’s male relatives (La Ferrara & Milazzo, 2017; Siegel, 1996; Takyi & Gyimah, 2007). Irrespective of the lineage systems one is born into, then, the rules tend to favour men over women.

The payment of a bride price (or bride-wealth as it is known in other cultures) is a universal practice common to all ethnic groups in Ghana (Dei, 2004; Nukunya, 2003). Although there are variations in the kinds of gift-payments offered by a male suitor, traditional marriage demands payments, known as the bride price (Siegel, 1996). In most instances, the bride's family accepts livestock (as practiced by ethnic groups in northern Ghana) or other moveable property (like African fabrics, drinks, traditional beaded jewellery, and money) as a form of compensation for the loss of their daughter's fertility and labour (Siegel, 1996). Marriages in Ghana gain legitimacy after the male suitor pays the bride price (Siegel, 1996).

I refer to the payment of the bride price to assert that the traditional obligation to provide the bride price hypothetically implies the cultural idea that women are part of the property of men. As Siegel (1996) argues, "a wife, at the time of her marriage, exchanges the authority of her father for that of her husband" (p. 9). Men (fathers, husbands, brothers, sons, and uncles) control every facet of their female relatives and are the primary decision-makers in the household and society in general. Lineage systems, cultural systems of inheritance, and the payment of a bride price reveal the complexity of the girls' position and rights in Ghana. As asserted by radical feminism, culture and traditional norms confine females to the domestic sphere by attaching strong values to their roles in the family and denying girls and women educational and economic opportunities (Stromquist, 1990).

Socialist feminism emphasizes patriarchy and economic forces as interconnected factors reinforcing women's oppression (Stromquist, 1990). According to this theory, patriarchy has enabled schools and other social institutions to become sites that reproduce women's oppression (Stromquist, 1990). Schools teach students to accept the sexual division of labour. Based on the reports by Ghana's Ministry of Education (2015), in the 2014/2015 academic year, 86% of the

teachers that worked at Early Childhood Education centers were female, as well as 83% in the kindergarten levels. However, few female teachers are qualified to teach at higher levels. The same report indicated that only 46% of teachers in the primary schools were female and only 30.4% in the junior high schools (Ministry of Education Report, 2015). Women play a maternal role within the education sector by teaching at the lowest levels (Early Childhood Education and kindergarten). As argued by socialist feminism, patriarchy which is the characteristic of Ghana's political terrain reinforce women's oppression (Stromquist, 1990). The political space in Ghana is male-dominated, making gender inequity an integral component of the general assembly and the local government. In the 2008 general elections, only 19 of the 230 parliamentary seats went to women (Addo, 2012). The 2012 general elections saw a mild improvement as women won 28 seats (Addo, 2012). Presently, there are 36 women and 194 men in parliament (Bauer, 2017). The underrepresentation of women in education and politics continues to be reflected in policy as men remain the key decision makers in Ghana. So, patriarchy, as noted by socialist feminism, deepens women's subordination (Stromquist, 1990).

A socialist feminist framework for education posits that patriarchy and economic factors create a sex-segregated field in school and the sexual division of labour. Most women work as reproducers of children and as workers in segregated labour in the informal sector of the economy (market-women), which requires little formal education (Stromquist, 1990). Men, on the other hand, dominate political spaces and social institutions such as schools.

Most girls fail to complete basic education because of unfavourable cultural norms and the lack of political will on the part of the government to make room for women in social and political spaces. The sexual harassment that girls confront from male-dominated teaching staff and students restricts school attendance and the retention of girls (Atta, 2015; Porter et al., 2011;

Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Therefore, the government should focus education policies on gender equity that would weaken traditional cultural values and practices that privilege men over women. However, Stromquist (1990) contends that state intervention is an overly optimistic position because state institutions have traditionally permitted the subordination and oppression of women.

Liberal, radical, and socialist feminism make essential contributions to debates on gender equity in education in suggesting the need to address factors like socialization and sex stereotyping, male domination, patriarchy, and the sexual division of labour. However, these feminist frameworks fail to capture the internal gender dynamics in African societies. Recognizing that cultural norms influence the worldviews of African men and women is vital in achieving gender equity. The feminist frameworks discussed in this chapter tend to use a similar ideological understanding of social relations to propose solutions for women as a collective. For instance, in Ghana, calling for the elimination of patriarchy is impossible because male dominance exists not only in political spaces and social institutions such as schools but is culturally ingrained in lineage systems, systems of inheritance, and marriage (Atta, 2015; Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008).

Advocating for changes to patriarchy in a traditional society such as Ghana can have adverse effects. Tanye (2008) claims that “female-oriented projects have led to conflicts with traditionally male-dominated structures in the areas where they are being undertaken” (p. 176). These conflicts have occurred because husbands perceive that their socioeconomic role as the sole breadwinner is challenged when women are empowered (Tanye, 2008). Recognizing that Ghanaian men feel threatened by a women’s success, most women hesitate to strive for financial independence, knowing it can negatively impact their family and community; for this reason,



“most women succumb to being dependent on men and sacrifice their education” (Tanye, 2008, p. 176). Strong cultural views dominate Ghanaian society and enforcing egalitarian ideals of gender can have dire consequences for family structures.

Liberal, radical, and socialist feminism all have limitations as theoretical frameworks for gender inclusive education in Ghana. These limitations stem from their inability to consider all the complexities and multiple perspectives involved in the suppression of women. For example, they do not consider how educational challenges, policies, programmes, and practices affect men and women differently as well as their underlying assumptions about men and women in society (Wallin, 2001). Neither do these theories consider personal experience and collaborative decision making, both of which are essential to achieving gender equity in education in Ghana (Wallin, 2001).

As I highlight in the next chapter, an alternative to these frameworks is Black Feminist Thought (BFT), an intersectional approach, which better fills in the theoretical gaps discussed in this chapter. Using an intersectional approach implies that in articulating oppression, we must analyze multiple sources like gender, race, social class, geographical location, religion and ethnicity (Bilge & Denis, 2010; Collins, 1989). Thus, BFT does not perceive women's experience to be homogenous but situates oppression within other potential sources of subordination. Using this approach, the experiences of girls and women are explored based on the cultural context in Ghana. Identifying the various experiences of girls and women, which are shaped by multiple sources like ethnicity, social class, religion, geographical location, language, and family structure will produce useful knowledge to inform inclusive strategies because the current education policies focus on gender more than how ethnic culture, social, and spatial inequalities influence gender.

## 2.5 Summary

This chapter has critically reviewed the literature on formal education and gender in Ghana, with a focus on key theories: post-colonial and anti-colonial theories; globalization theories; and liberal, radical, and socialist feminism. Post-colonial and anti-colonial theories posit that the source of gender inequity in schools are European ideologies like Victorian values and Christianity (Dei, 2005; MacBeath, 2010; Pola, 2008). These theories suggest if Ghana is to create equal opportunity for girls and decolonize education, the focus must be on indigenous ways of knowing (Dei, 2005). Globalization situates the challenge of gender inequity within the context of the negative consequence of global economic reform programmes, like the Structural Adjustment, which has led to increased privatization and cutbacks on social spending (Jones & Chant, 2009; Porter et al., 2011; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). According to globalization theories, increased privatization harms the local economy. When parents are financially insecure, they often send only their boys to school because they perceive that boys need education more than girls as they will eventually be the breadwinners (Jones & Chant, 2009; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). Theories of liberal, radical, and socialist feminism relate girls' and boys' unequal access to education to socialization and sex stereotyping, male domination, patriarchy, and the sexual division of labour (Porter et al., 2011; Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008; Stromquist, 1990). These theories put forth that fundamental changes in socialization, eradicating male dominance and patriarchy, and giving girls' access to knowledge and opportunities, will improve the gender inequity in education (Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008; Stromquist, 1990).

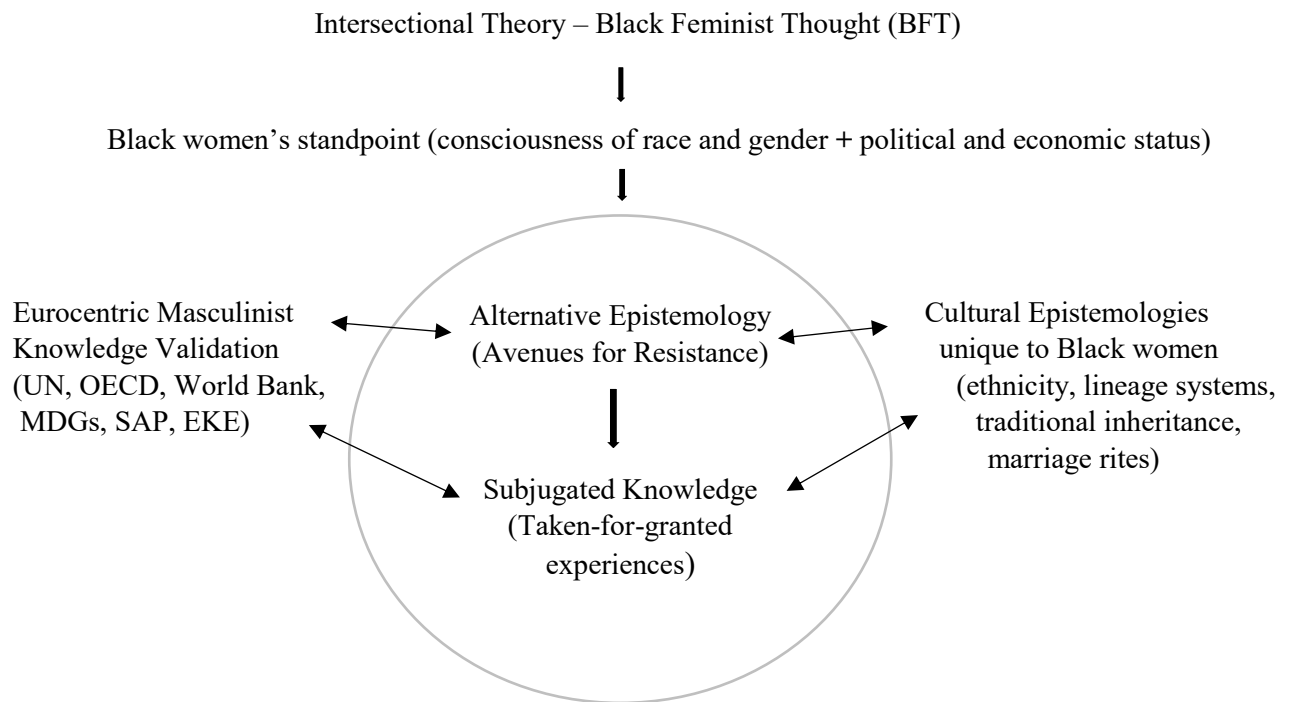
The post-colonial and anti-colonial perspectives, globalization theory, and feminist frameworks have made significant contributions to addressing the gender inequity in education

in the African context. However, they have limitations as theoretical frameworks for this study. Post-colonial and anti-colonial theories are inappropriate because relying on indigenous knowledge, as proponents of post-colonial and anti-colonial theories suggest, will not lead to an inclusive resistance, as this knowledge in Ghana is dominated by male epistemologies. Globalization theories, on the other hand, are not appropriate because donor support used to minimize the effects of promoting increased privatization has led the African governments to rely too much on the West, and most African governments lack the political will to formulate country-specific educational programmes. Instead, Africa relies on global institutions like the United Nations and the World Bank to define gender equity and set targets for achieving equal access to opportunity. Finally, theories of liberal, radical, and socialist feminism are inappropriate because socialization and sex stereotyping, male domination, patriarchy and the sexual division of labour manifest differently, especially in the African context where there are ethnic-cultural differences, lineage systems, and traditional inheritance systems. Arguments of liberal, radical and socialist feminists to change the process of socialization and sex stereotyping, male domination, patriarchy and the sexual division of labour require a clear understanding of the local variations in culture (defined by ethnic groups) because standard solutions will not address the subordination of girls and women as a collective in Ghana. As a result of the deficiencies in these theories as frameworks to examine Ghanaian women's subordination, I have chosen the intersectional framework of Black Feminist Thought for this study. My reasons for doing so are discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The study adopts an intersectional theoretical framework to fill the gaps in the literature. The intersectional approach suitable for the study is Black Feminist Thought (BFT). This framework is useful for promoting gender equity in education because the focus is on exploring the experiences of stakeholders and beneficiaries of public education. The experiences of individuals and groups are sources for building alternative knowledge (Collins, 1989). Lived experiences are valid because they are not the same for all members of a group (Collins, 1989). Through intersectional analysis, the study considers the varied local contexts for exploring gender and educational attainment based on the experiences of the marginalized group. Figure 3.1 presents BFT and a summary of how the theory is applied in this study.



*Figure 3.1.* Black Feminist Thought: The Approach for Articulating the Gender Inequity in Education in Ghana

As can be seen in Figure 3.1, standpoint has a prominent place in the framework (Collins, 1989). Black women’s standpoint is valuable because it is based on mixed experiences of race, gender and social class (political and economic status). The intersection of race, gender and social class create an alternative knowledge unique to black women and separate from the established social order (Collins, 1989). Within this alternative knowledge are avenues for resisting oppression. However, two factors hinder black women’s standpoint: Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation and cultural epistemologies unique to black women. Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation consists of positivist approaches that focus on the “scientific description of reality by producing objective generalizations” (Collins, 1989, p. 754). Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation is reproduced through institutions like the United

Nations (UN), the World Bank, and other regional organizations like the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Standard frameworks like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and Education for the Knowledge Economy (EKE) maintain the values and interest of elite white males.

As the framework also demonstrates, cultural epistemologies unique to black women represent a second factor that influences the avenues for resistance. In the West African context, ethnicity, lineage systems, and marriage rites work to oppress girls and women. In Ghana and other African countries, ethnic groups (people with a common descent without being connected by blood relationships) determine the lineage system (patrilineal or matrilineal), inheritance patterns as well as the type of marriage rites (bride price payments). These cultural factors intersect to shape the life experiences of girls and women in Ghana, revealing that gender roles and expectations are not homogenous but are varied. So within the African context, black women's experiences which are shaped by race, gender, social class (political and economic status) and culture become subjugated knowledge (Taken-for-granted experiences) because these experiences are denied validation within the dominant ideologies (patriarchy, gender asymmetry, etc.) that influence policy.

### **3.2 Theoretical Analysis**

As Collins (1989) contends, intersectionality is critical to Black Feminist Thought (BFT). The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in the 1980s to critique single-issue agendas of social movements within black feminist scholarship (Bilge & Denis, 2010).

According to Crenshaw, intersectionality involves “the concurrent analysis of multiple, intersecting sources of subordination or oppression and is based on the premise that the impact of a particular source of subordination may vary depending on its combination with other potential

sources of subordination or of relative privilege” (as cited in Bilge & Denis, 2010, p. 4).

Intersectionality is more than a tool used to examine subordinate subject positions; it can also be used to effectively problematize dominance, such as “whiteness and class privilege or ambiguous relationships, such as in-group racialization of gender” (Bilge & Denis, 2010, p. 5).

Collins (1989) integrated intersectionality into BFT, which is based on studying the consciousness of oppressed groups. The main argument about the consciousness of oppressed groups states that “subordinate groups identify with the powerful and have no valid independent interpretation of their own oppression” (Collins, 1989, p. 746). Consequently, oppressed groups are perceived as “less human than their rulers, and, therefore, are less capable of articulating their own standpoint” (Collins, 1989, p. 747). Underlying Collins’s (1989) argument is the idea that oppressed groups lack the motivation for political activism because the consciousness of their subordination is flawed by dominant ideologies external to lived experiences. I use BFT as my theoretical framework because I agree with Collins’ argument: if oppressed groups lack the motivation for political activism, it is only because their lived experiences are taken for granted due to the dominance of ideologies that are external to their lived experiences. Although Collins (1989) asserts that race and gender work together to define the experiences of black women, she acknowledged social class (political and economic status) provides black women with a distinctive set of experiences compared to other groups. Black Feminist Thought (intersections of race, gender and social class) can create avenues of resistance if the lived experiences of black women are not taken for granted.

In my analysis of low educational attainment among girls in Ghana, I refer to social positions such as patrilineal and matrilineal systems, religion (Christianity and Islam), and geographical location (rural and urban) as factors that intersect to emphasize the taken-for-

granted experiences of girls in Ghana. A goal of this study is to demonstrate the need for the government to consider factors such as ethnic-cultural norms, religion, and spatial differences that intersect with and influence gender differences in educational attainment. I justify the adoption of BFT by presenting an alternative indigenized framework – *Intersectionality of the African Feminist Standpoint* – which explores how social class, language and ethnic culture (expressed through marriage and family structure) intersect to marginalize some girls further and deprive them of the opportunity to access knowledge through formal education in Ghana. I proposed an alternative indigenized framework because BFT, as articulated by Collins (1989), focus on the experiences of African American women using core themes of work, family, sexual politics, motherhood and political activism to emphasize their intersectional oppression. Although these core topics are essential to interpreting the complexity of black women's experiences, the realities and social conditions of women in Ghana, and other African nations are different. Thus the need for the African Feminist Standpoint Thought for articulating the sources of oppression or relative privilege among girls and women in Ghana. The contribution of this section is twofold: to discuss race and gender as fundamental sources that define the experiences of African women based on the arguments of Collins (1989) and to present the complexities of the experiences of girls and women in Ghana using an alternative indigenized intersectional framework (African Feminist Standpoint). The end goal is to identify and explain the reasons for the exclusion of girls' experiences from the realm of education policy.

Black Feminist Thought postulates the idea that a subordinate group lives a different reality from the dominant group. The subordinate group's interpretation of reality is always different from that of the dominant group, and the alternative interpretation offered by subordinate groups is essential for resisting oppression and making inclusive policies. To



understand the experiences of black women, Collins (1989) provided two foundational tenets: the Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation process and the value of black women's standpoint (Collins, 1989). Standpoint, as used by Collins (1989), implies the experiences that are associated with race, gender and social class (political and economic status). The two tenets proposed by Collins (1989) guide this thesis discussion on the exclusion of girls' reality from education policy in Ghana.

The consciousness needed by black women to resist oppression lies within their culture and traditions (Collins, 1989). However, the avenue for resistance is restricted by the Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation process (Collins, 1989). The question is how does the process of Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation work to counter the resistance of oppressed black women? The answer lies within the epistemologies of traditional scholarship dominated by the themes and values of elite white men who control structures of knowledge validation (Collins, 1989). This scholarship does not capture the experiences of women of African descent. Instead, their experiences are routinely distorted transnationally or excluded from what counts as knowledge (Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, & Virk, 2012; Collins, 1989). The dominant BFT comes from Eurocentric masculinist knowledge, which has suppressed and ignored the lived experiences of black women (Collins, 1989). The Eurocentric masculinist knowledge of black women is the validated knowledge regulating and guiding policies and practices.

Collins (1989) purports that knowledge validation functions within official institutions like schools and universities controlled by elite white males. Although not all formal institutions are under the direct administration of elite white men, these institutions embody values that benefit the interests of elite white men (Collins, 1989). Consequently, black women move through a variety of different paradigms. These paradigms include the Eurocentric masculinist

knowledge validation and varying cultural epistemologies unique to black women. Paradigms, as used by Collins (1989), imply intersecting categories or the multiple sources of oppression.

Knowledge validation is a fundamental problem connected to gender and education in Ghana and other African countries. The historical experiences of colonialism established Eurocentric masculinist epistemologies, and through missionary schools, the interests of elite white males continued to be disproportionately prioritized even after Ghana's independence in 1957 (MacBeath, 2010). Furthermore, although Ghana is under the direct administration of indigenous elite black males, globalization and the international development agenda entrench Eurocentric masculinist knowledge systems. As foreign donors fund 90% of Ghana's public basic education (Table 2.1, p. 29), the government must adhere to a global framework for universal basic education that replicates the colonial structure. The current schooling system tends to favour African male children because the Eurocentric values of colonialists operate in social and political spaces (Dei, 2005; MacBeath, 2010; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). With male dominance in social and political spaces, Eurocentric masculinist epistemologies constitute a political criterion that works to suppress black women (Collins, 1989). Consequentially, education policies aimed at achieving gender equity since Ghana's independence have failed to generate the desired results.

Central to educational institutions in Ghana are Victorian values about girls and the subordinate role of women in Christian doctrines (MacBeath, 2010). According to Tanye (2008), Christian missionaries "built more boys' schools than girls' schools because of society's attitude toward the education of females and its support for the Christian fundamentalist understanding of the role of women" (p. 177). After Ghana's independence from colonial rule, an unwritten policy provided only a few places in co-educational institutions for boys/girls when the post-colonial

government started building secondary schools (Tanye, 2008). Thus, a connection exists between girls' lower educational attainment and the Eurocentric masculinist epistemology of colonialism.

The Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation also influenced the adoption of English as the official instructional language in schools and the banning of local dialects from academic spaces (Owo-Ewie, 2006). Eurocentric masculinist epistemologies like Victorian values were an integral part of the curriculum's content (MacBeath, 2010). Missionary schools confined females to the study of domestic science and taught them skills like cookery, laundry, child welfare, and needlework (Pola, 2008). Males studied reading, writing, and arithmetic in addition to acquiring skills such as carpentry, masonry, Blacksmithing, and shoemaking (Pola, 2008). Thus, this education granted males access to work in public spaces outside the household. Eurocentric and European values were used to suppress differences and foster conformity, just like the conformity expected in European societies (Dei, 2005). As a result, the current education system keeps reproducing gender and sexual inequity in Ghana (Dei, 2005).

Another reason for the continuing suppression of women's education and gender inequities is the domination of males in education administration, which started in the colonial era (Dei, 2005; MacBeath, 2010). The male-oriented leadership in the OECD that replaced the UNESCO as the central focus of political coordination among developed nations emphasized Eurocentric masculinist domination (Gil, 2013). The OECD has assigned itself the mandate of serving as the key player in education policy through the formulation and coordination of international educational frameworks (Gil, 2013). Considering the domination of Eurocentric masculinist knowledge in organizations like the OECD, the dependency relationship between the West and its former colonies deepens. In effect, domestic education policies often reflect the global education agenda under the directives of the OECD.

Having discussed the influence of Eurocentric masculinist knowledge on former colonies, I now turn to the two political criteria for understanding knowledge validation provided by Collins (1989). These political criteria are as follows: 1. knowledge claims evaluated by experts and 2. knowledge claims by the broader community (Calhoun et al., 2012; Collins, 1989). Knowledge claims by experts are those detached experiences influenced by group location (Collins, 1989). Expert knowledge is validated when claims are made by “elite, white, avowedly heterosexual men” (Calhoun et al., 2012, p. 409). Related examples are global indicators like the Gender Parity Index (GPI) associated with the MDGs and the World Bank’s modernist education policies on Education for the Knowledge Economy. In Ghana, the GPI has failed as a measure for evaluating girls’ basic educational attainment because the index does not capture the local context and experiences of girls in school (Unterhalter & North, 2011). Although the national enrolment rate for girls in primary schools was 110% for the 2014/2015 school year, the GPI could not ensure retention or completion (Ministry of Education Report, 2012; 2015). Based on the reports by Ghana’s Ministry of Education (2015) girls completion rate at the final level of basic education was 70.6% during the 2014/2015 school year. As Unterhalter & North (2011) argue, “gender parity in school enrolment, as many commentators acknowledge, is not the same as gender equity, which entails wider concerns with rights in and through education” (p. 5).

The World Bank has recently been advocating for Education for the Knowledge Economy. As noted by Kuyini (2013), the policy of Education for the Knowledge Economy is an attempt to further Western cultural imperialism. Based on previous global standardization of economic frameworks, as seen in the case of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), expert knowledge has failed to deliver positive development outcomes for the global South. The need to advance the knowledge economy is essential to Western nations because of their

emphasis on science and technology as a measure of development (Kuyini, 2013). However, the local realities of African countries are different as most public schools lack adequate infrastructures like toilet facilities, classrooms, study desks, libraries, textbooks and teaching materials (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Porter et al., 2011). Education policies must focus on developing capacities for students to make an impact at the domestic level and “not subjugate national domestic priorities to the mirage of international credibility competitiveness” (Kuyini, 2013, p. 157). The Education for the Knowledge Economy proposed by the World Bank is perceived to be another act of agenda setting that strives for universal values and ideals without a focus on local realities in African countries.

The strength of Collins’ (1989) argument lies in the validation of knowledge of the broader communities that is often taken-for-granted. As Collins (1989) and Calhoun et al. (2012) argue, because community knowledge often challenges hegemonic masculine thought, it is discredited by experts as invalid. Local epistemologies (broader communities’ knowledge) perceived as ‘subjugated knowledge’ are used by populations disadvantaged by broader social environments to express their suppressed ideas (Calhoun et al., 2012; Collins, 1989). Subjugated knowledge often takes the form of music, literature, conversation, and daily behaviour but is not in mainstream institutions since validation in these institutions demeans local epistemologies (Collins, 1989). Subjugated knowledge is relevant because decolonization can only come from within non-western cultures and not from the patterns of Western hegemony and ideology that have constructed people’s social condition (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Elabor-Idemudia, 2002). The worldviews black women have sustained based on their history, allows for the development of an alternative epistemology. Educational policies seeking inclusivity must acknowledge and consider knowledge derived from the experiences of girls and women within their specific

locations and histories and not focus on expert knowledge as the only credible source (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010).

Apart from the rejection of local epistemologies, the second foundational tenet that provides alternative knowledge is the standpoint of black women (Collins, 1989). Black women's standpoint stems from "the consciousness of race and gender oppression" (Collins, 1989, p. 758). Although race and gender are important to understanding black women's oppression and the context of domination, the standpoint of black women is not separate from political and economic reality (Calhoun et al., 2012; Collins, 1989). Therefore, race, gender and social class are essential perspectives that intersect to produce an experience unique to black women. In the case of Ghana, the consciousness of girls and women stems from cultural factors like ethnicity (referred to as tribes), lineage systems (patrilineal and matrilineal kinship), social class, religion, and geographical location (rural and urban). The alternate view of black women fostered by Black feminist epistemology (the intersection of ethnicity, lineage, social class, religion, and geographical location) is an expression of consciousness, and this consciousness provides the tools for resisting oppression (Collins, 1989).

I now describe West African feminist standpoint using the unique experiences of Ghanaian women and girls, which have been ignored by the current basic education policy for gender equity. According to Porter et al. (2011), girls' position within Ghanaian family hierarchies is lower than that of boys. However, depending on the lineage system, the social placement of girls is likely to be different. For instance, in matrilineal cultures where children trace kinship ties through their mother, the position of girls differs from those with patrilineal kinship ties (Porter et al., 2011). The standpoint of girls in Ghana is not homogenous, something worth noting when it comes to education policy implementation.

In Ghana, specific ethnic-cultural practices adhered to by the patrilineal group contribute to girls' vulnerability and oppression. As an example, Tanye (2008) points to an ethnic-cultural practice known as *Trokosi*. In this long-practiced "form of ritual slavery," every family must give up "a virgin daughter to the shrine as a symbolic wife" who "atones for the sins and deity crimes" of usually male relations (Tanye, 2008, p. 171). Families give up their young daughters between the ages of eight and 15 to serve the deity or suffer the consequences of "misery, misfortune, disease, and even a succession of deaths in the family" (Tanye, 2008, p. 171). Most often, these girls spend their entire lives as wives of the deities and are unable to attain any education (Tanye, 2008). The cultural practice is common in rural communities where traditional male epistemology operates with little contestation. The *Trokosi* tradition demonstrates the experiences of girls based on ethnicity (Ewe), lineage (patrilineal), geographical location (Volta region of Ghana), and religion (traditional deity worship).

Although Ghana's Constitution states "no person shall be held in slavery or servitude or be required to perform slave labour," the ruling government has not attempted to abolish the *Trokosi* practice and other forms of biased cultural practices (as cited in Tanye, 2008, p. 172). Reports in 2003 indicate that about 10,000 women were in bondage due to the *Trokosi* tradition (Tanye, 2008). However, successive governments have frequently taken a cultural relativist position by allowing practices that discriminate against girls and women to continue. Cultural relativism means that beliefs, values, and practices of culture are subjective and should be evaluated and understood based on their unique terms (Ravelli & Webber, 2016). As Tanye (2008) argues, what matters to those who allow *Trokosi* to continue is that the "goals of the custodians of that culture" (p. 172) be respected; thus, their culture is upheld, promoted, and condoned even if human rights are violated.

The preceding discussion of the different experiences of girls in Ghana is fundamentally relevant to understanding the values and whose perspectives are taken into account in determining education policy. Black Feminist Thought is a useful tool for deconstructing the marginalization of girls in Ghana and the barriers they face in accessing and completing basic education. Because the government prefers expert knowledge (universal standards and ideals of gender equity), the current education framework for gender equity ignores the experiences of girls and women in Ghana.

Expert knowledge is privileged and validated based on positivist methodological approaches. Collins (1989) contends that the goal of positivist approaches is to produce “objective generalizations” that scientifically describe “reality” (p. 754). However, according to Collins (1989), by relying on positivist approaches, genuine science is unattainable because researchers have different values, experiences, and emotions. The only credible way to produce objective generalizations is to eliminate all human characteristics from the research process, which, of course, is impossible (Collins, 1989).

Collins (1989) goes further to provide four dimensions for validating Black feminist knowledge systems. These four dimensions are relevant to my research because they provide frames for data collection. The first dimension suggests that lived experiences are criteria for drawing meaning. Collins (1989) argues that people who “have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be experts” have more credibility than “those who have merely read or thought about such experiences” (p. 759). When people share lived experiences, such experiences become criteria for credibility. The second dimension emphasizes the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims: knowledge usually develops through dialogue in communities and not in isolation (Collins, 1989). Since, as part of African culture, women in



subordinate positions often embrace holistic worldviews that seek harmony rather than separate knowledge claims, dialogue becomes a useful tool for exploring knowledge claims. The third dimension for validating Black feminist epistemologies is the ethics of caring (Calhoun et al., 2012; Collins, 1989), which embodies three components: the uniqueness of individuals and personal expressiveness; the appropriateness of emotions in dialogue, based on Collins's (1989) belief that through emotion, speakers demonstrate their claim's validity; and the capacity for developing empathy. These three aspects of the ethics of caring are meant to generate connected ways of knowing (Collins, 1989). The final dimension for validating knowledge claims is personal accountability. This claim reinforces the idea that individuals must develop their knowledge claims through dialogue and share these knowledge claims in a manner that proves their concern for their ideas (Collins, 1989). As Collins (1989) argues, it is vital for individuals to take personal positions on issues and assume responsibility for arguing for the validity of their issues (Collins, 1989).

The research for this thesis focuses on understanding the experiences of various groups (policy administrators, educators, and beneficiaries of education policies and practices). Evidence from personal experience, dialogue, the ethics of caring, and personal accountability is stronger than reported statistics, which often do not capture detailed individual experiences (Collins, 1989). In conclusion, Ghana has failed to achieve the MDG for gender equity in basic education because the policy process does not consider the specificities of the local context often characterized by diverse cultural norms, ethnic groups, and traditions.

### **3.3 An Alternative Indigenized Framework for Articulating the Intersectionality of the African Feminist Standpoint**

Figure 3.2 below is an indigenized theoretical representation of my study's analytical framework based on Collins's (1989) Black Feminist Thought. Collins (1989) acknowledged that black people share a common experience of oppression because of colonialism, imperialism, apartheid and other systems of racial discrimination. Despite the shared experience of oppression among black people, Collins (1989) suggested that African American women, African American men, African women and other oppressed groups have distinct standpoints, so each group must use epistemological approaches growing from its unique experience to establish "objective" truths. The indigenized framework I present adopts epistemological approaches based on the lived experiences of girls and women in Ghana. In addition to race, gender and social class, the framework I propose, use ethnic culture as a critical factor that shapes the context of indigenous male domination and the oppression of girls and women in Ghana.

The rationale for what is referred to as *The Intersectionality of the African Feminist Standpoint* is to justify the need to consider the experiences of girls and women in Africa using Ghana as a reference. A standpoint as used in this analysis refers to privileging the viewpoint and/or lived experiences of individuals and groups. The framework I propose has two fundamental realms of knowledge: the Eurocentric epistemological paradigm and the indigenous epistemological paradigm. The Eurocentric epistemological understanding represents the external ideologies that use conformist processes enforced by colonialism. Examples are race (grouping people based on skin pigmentation), a common language (English as used in missionary schools), and Christianity. The indigenous epistemological paradigm represents the internal variations of the local context shaped by tradition and culture. The indigenous

epistemological realm operates based on diversity among peoples and cultures. However, both paradigms intersect to influence the experiences of girls and women in Ghana and other African nations. The intersection between the two realms of knowledge provides a list of variables that influence the experiences of African women and indicates avenues for resistance.

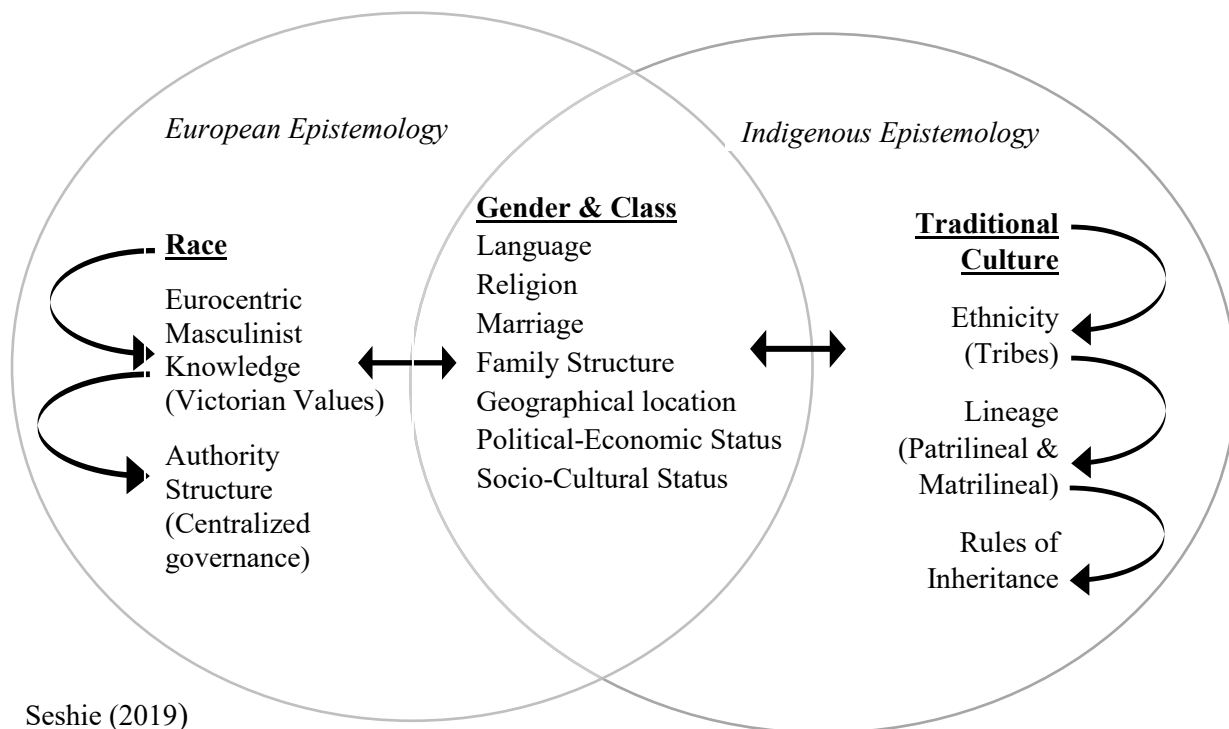


Figure 3.2. The Intersectionality of the African Feminist Standpoint

The European ethnocentric ideologies enforced through colonialism relied on coercive mechanisms, such as Christianity, missionary schools, the use of English (in Anglophone colonies) as the official language, and Victorian values to achieve a centralized authority structure (MacBeath, 2010). Colonialists sought to create a conformist society so that they could maintain dominance in their colonies. The adoption of an official language like English, French, or Portuguese was significant. With a common language in multilingual societies in Africa, the

locals became converted to Christianity in missionary schools and were exposed to Eurocentric values (MacBeath, 2010). However, the colonial rule had different impacts on men and women because of the Eurocentric patriarchal values embedded in Victorian ideals (MacBeath, 2010).

During the Victorian era, women were not allowed to vote, sue, or own property (MacBeath, 2010). The values of the Victorian era were the basis for discrimination against indigenous African girls and women. Girls and women were expected to manage the domestic sector and raise children. Missionary schools restricted girls to the study of domestic science, which consisted of skills like cookery, laundry, child welfare, and needlework (Pola, 2008). Colonial schools were mainly for the children of European merchants and their African women (Pola, 2008; Thompson, 2002). The schools later admitted children of wealthy African merchants and relatives of some important local chiefs (Pola, 2008; Thompson, 2002), thus implying that 'social class' was a criterion for attaining access to colonial education. Gender and social class were and still are significant categories for exploring the experiences of West African women regarding social positions and access to education.

On the other hand, the internal diversity enforced by the traditional culture can be understood based on ethnicity (known as tribes in Ghana), lineage systems, and the traditional rules of inheritance. Ghanaians define ethnicity as groups with a subjective belief that they share a common descent, migration history, similar physical characteristics, and customs without being connected by blood relationships (La Ferrara, 2007). Kinship ties are established based on lineage systems. The Ghanaian understanding of kinship ties is traced through patrilineal or matrilineal lines (La Ferrara, 2007). Patrilineal or matrilineal kinship ties involve some form of blood relationship (La Ferrara, 2007).

Within the patrilineal system, children are part of their father's family and trace their kinship ties through the male line (La Ferrara & Milazzo, 2017). In the matrilineal system, children trace their descent through mothers (La Ferrara & Milazzo, 2017), as "only females can pass kin membership on to their offspring and children are part of their mother's kin group" (La Ferrara & Milazzo, 2017, p. 4). However, the matrilineal system is not matriarchal (rule by women). The brothers of mothers hold formal positions of authority (La Ferrara & Milazzo, 2017). The traditional laws of inheritance state that only male members hold the rights to inherit family properties including lands and houses in patrilineal and matrilineal systems (Kutsoati & Morck, 2012; Siegel, 1996;). Nonetheless, females may inherit moveable properties (cooking utensils, jewelry, and traditional fabrics) belonging to their mother in both patrilineal and matrilineal groups (La Ferrara & Milazzo, 2017; Takyi & Gyimah, 2007). The above explanation is designed to establish how ethnicity, kinship ties, and rules of inheritance shape family structures and the social positions accorded to men and women in Ghana. In articulating the standpoint of West African women and relating it to educational attainment in Ghana, gender and social class intersects with language, religion, marriage, family structure, and geographical location (Figure 3.2) to explain the multiple sources of social positions that aggregate to oppress girls and exclude them from achieving a basic education.

The first variable in the intersected paradigm of my proposed framework is language. In Ghana and other African countries, all ethnic groups have their unique language or local dialect. However, few of the local dialects are used by the larger society. It is estimated that the number of indigenous languages spoken in Ghana varies from 30 to 81 (Opoku-Amankwa, Edu-Buandoh & Brew-Hammond, 2015). However, four languages - Twi, Ewe, Ga, and Dagbani - are used by mainstream society (Owu-Ewie, 2006). As noted by Opoku-Amankwa et al. (2015), the Basel

mission schools, and the Wesleyan Church translated the English Bible into Twi, Ewe, and Ga during the colonial era. The use of vernacular (Twi, Ewe, and Ga) by the missionaries was not aimed at promoting the languages and cultures of these ethnic groups but done to convert the locals to Christianity (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015). However, the selected local dialects became dominant and were accorded a higher value relative to others. After Ghana's independence in 1957, the government included Dagbani (a language used in the northern region) as well as Twi, Ga, and Ewe in the language policy for education (Owu-Ewie, 2006; Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015). This language policy is evident in the selected languages (Dagbani, Twi, Ga, and Ewe) offered by the University of Ghana as compulsory courses for all students to promote inter-linguistic competency (University of Ghana, 2015).

I refer to the colonial history of language policy to emphasize the dominance and hierarchy of specific local languages in Ghana. Consequently, the ethnic groups that have their dialect taught in formal institutions are more respected than others (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015). Thus, the language spoken by an individual can be a source of relative privilege or oppression. For instance, girls born in northern Ghana suffer more discrimination than others because the languages (local dialects) in those regions are considered inferior compared to the dominant ones like Twi, Ewe, and Ga (Owu-Ewie, 2006; Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015).

Girls and women in Northern Ghana face multiple intersections that aggregate to oppress them. Northern Ghana comprises patrilineal ethnic groups that are mainly Muslims by religious affiliation (Lambert, Perrino & Barreras, 2012). The northern communities tend to emphasize submissive roles for women, as the traditional practice (i.e., patrilineal lineage) and religious doctrines (Islam) combine to limit the opportunities given to female members (Lambert et al., 2012). Additionally, Northern Ghana remains the most impoverished region in Ghana because of

the spatial discrimination that occurred during the colonial era (MacBeath, 2010). Because they favoured the enriched natural resources in southern Ghana, the colonial administrators introduced a bias in infrastructural development (Tanye, 2008). Educational facilities were weakened in the north as all the resources for education were poured into the south, the hub for the nation's natural resources (Tanye, 2008). The northern regions remain the poorest and most discriminated against in terms of infrastructure. Ethnicity, geographical location, religion (Christianity, Islam, or Traditional), and language create subjective experiences within the collective. The gender inequity and regional disparity in education are evident in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1

*Adults 15 years and older who have attended school by region, and sex in Ghana (2014)*

Regions	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Western	84.3	90.4	78.6
Central	79.1	89.6	70.7
Greater Accra	90.4	95.2	86.2
Volta	74.1	82.4	67.3
Eastern	83.9	90.9	78.0
Ashanti	84.7	90.0	80.2
Brong Ahafo	72.7	79.4	67.0
Northern	38.2	49.2	28.6
Upper East	50.4	59.4	42.6
Upper West	51.7	61.8	42.4
Total	76.5	83.5	70.4

*Note.* From the Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana Living Standard Survey (2014, p. 15)

Table 3.1 shows the literacy percentages across the 10 regions in Ghana. The Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions combine to constitute the Northern regions of Ghana. Evidence from the table indicates less than 50% of females have access to formal education in the Northern regions compared to other regions in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

Religion remains an important variable when articulating the in-group experiences of girls and women in Ghana. Beyond the submissive role of women embedded in Islam, Christianity, and traditional religions in Ghana, Islam permits men explicitly to marry up to four wives if they have the means to take care of each wife (Lambert et al., 2012; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). The connection of the Islamic doctrine to Ghana's polygamous practices contributes to the oppression of girls and women.

The oppression of girls and women in Northern Ghana is particularly acute. They face the double oppression of religion (Islam) and ethnic culture. As Tuwor and Sossou (2008) indicate, some parents in misinterpreting the principles of Islam, refuse to send their daughters to school, but most girls in Northern Ghana attain low education because they end up in polygamous marriages when they reach puberty (Atta, 2015; Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Ethnic-cultural practices also oppress girls and women in Northern Ghana. Early marriages guarantee particular prestige as families are provided valuable bride prices for their daughters (Tanye, 2008). Tanye (2008) reveals that in some parts of northern Ghana, the initial bride price of seven cows is supplemented with three more when a daughter gives birth to three boys in succession. Parents tend to use the bride price to pay off debts or as payments for "wives for their sons or other males in the family" (Tanye, 2008, p. 170). This double oppression is also prevalent in Northern Nigeria. As Tuwor and Sossou (2008) note in a study conducted in Northern Nigeria, "55% of girls aged 15 to 19 years were pregnant or were already mothers" (p. 368). In Northern Ghana, this double oppression is compounded by financial problems, when parents of large financially stretched families enroll sons in school more often than daughters. In Ghana, multiple identities, ethnicities, religions, and social roles intersect to oppress women, but for various



reasons, the women and girls of northern Ghana are even more marginalized than those in other parts of the country.

This discussion reveals how traditional doctrines and practices in Ghana require women to engage in reproductive and domestic roles. Ghanaian cultural values promote polygamous families, although modernity has instilled the need for monogamous families. Whether a girl is raised in a monogamous or polygamous family will determine her opportunities when it comes to formal education. In addition to family size and structure (monogamous or polygamous), it is crucial to link social class and geographical location as intersecting variables when articulating the experiences of girls and women in Ghana. I was born and raised in one of the communities in Ghana's capital region. I had the opportunity to attend a private school for primary and secondary education. Most city dwellers come from middle- and upper-class families and have a monogamous family structure. In addition to having large families because of polygamy, families living in the suburbs and in rural and remote areas tend to be of a lower social class. Their daughters patronize public schools, which often have poor infrastructure and inadequate resources. Hence, the dropout rates are higher in the suburbs and rural regions of Ghana. The experiences shaped by the intersection of family size and structure, social class, and geographical location imply different standpoints (experiences) of girls and women in Ghana. As a result, recognizing the heterogeneity within the local context as it pertains to gender is significant to policy reform in education.

In conclusion, as asserted by Collins (1989), it is not feasible to articulate the social positions and experiences of girls and women in Ghana and other parts of Africa based only on the consciousness of race, gender and social class. The African culture and the different traditional norms of ethnic groups reveal multiple layers of oppression or relative privilege

depending on the context and intersecting variables, as indicated in Figure 3.2. Therefore, the universal standard approach – guided by Eurocentric knowledge for interpreting gender oppression and solving gender inequity in education – has proven to be ineffective. It is important to note that girls and women in Ghana experience in-group inequalities based on intersections of ethnicity, lineage, language, religion, marriage, family structure, and geographical location. The intersection of these multiple sources of oppression or relative privilege determines the political-economic status and socio-cultural status of girls and women in Ghana.

### **3.4 Summary**

This chapter has explained the reasons for the gender inequity in Ghanaian education using the intersectional framework of Black Feminist Thought. As proposed by Collins (1989), black women's experiences are defined by the consciousness of race, gender and social class, but the consciousness of race, gender and social class that determines black women's experiences are flawed in view of the dominant Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation and cultural epistemologies unique to black women. In this study, I refer to the MDGs, SAP and EKE as global frameworks that promote and maintain the Eurocentric masculinist knowledge transnationally. Consequently, Ghana and other African countries adopt policies that reflect Eurocentric values with no recognition of the local specifics that influence the life experiences of marginalized groups including girls and women. Moreover, cultural epistemologies that guide how ethnic groups define lineage and marriage rites in the West African context are essential sources that influence the experiences of girls and women. The lived experiences of girls and women in Ghana become taken-for-granted, although the value of these experiences can lead to alternative knowledge relevant for inclusive policies. In addition to promoting an inclusive

knowledge through lived experiences, BFT offers four dimensions for validating Black feminist knowledge systems. These dimensions include lived experiences as criteria for drawing meaning, the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, the ethics of caring and finally, the enforcement of personal accountability. Collins (1989) argues that these four dimensions provide avenues for resistance among oppressed groups.

I expand on BFT by proposing a framework that addresses the intersecting sources of relative privilege and oppression among girls and women in Ghana. My proposed framework, which is an interpretation of the intersectionality of the African feminist standpoint as depicted in Figure 3.2, presents two dominant realms of knowledge: the Eurocentric epistemological sphere and the indigenous epistemological field. The paradigms are shaped by denominators like race, gender, social class, and traditional culture. Each knowledge realm produces unique values. A centralized governance structure and Victorian Values are tenets of the European epistemological sphere, while ethnicity (tribes), kinship ties (patrilineal and matrilineal), and the traditional laws of inheritance emphasize the indigenous epistemological realm. The two paradigms intersect to influence variables like language, religion, marriage, family structure, geographical location, political-economic status, and socio-cultural status.

Understanding the multiple social positions and how they intersect to create a unique experience for girls and women in Ghana is relevant for achieving gender equity in education. The extent of a girl's education will determine her status in society, and, conversely, her societal status will determine the extent of her education. Women born into middle-class families with access to quality education will enjoy relatively high political, social, and economic status in both the private and public spheres. Even in patrilineal lineages and Islamic communities, where

females occupy subordinate positions, education for girls will empower them to rise above cultural and religious norms that demean their human value.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

As the purpose of the study is to determine the reasons for the failure of the Ghanaian government's education policies and practices in achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of gender equity in basic education, a qualitative research design was adopted. It entails literature and journal article review, government reports, and census data for gender in basic education in Ghana. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with policy administrators and educators, and focus group discussions (FGDs) involving parents of children enrolled in public schools in the Tema Metropolitan Area (TMA) of Ghana. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Three groups participated in the study: parents, educators, and policy officers at the Ghana Education Service (GES).

Content analysis was used for coding and forming thematic groupings of the participant responses. The qualitative software programme Nvivo was used to generate a word map and a word cluster analysis, which informed the researcher about the frequency of words used by the participants. The section concludes with detailed information about ethical considerations like data storage, dissemination of the study, risks, and research benefits. The fieldwork challenges and limitations of the study are also discussed.

### **4.2 Research Design and Methods**

The research strategy for the study employs qualitative methods. Qualitative research does not rely on numerical conversion but works with detailed descriptions to understand the meaning individuals and groups ascribe to the social or human problem under consideration (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research uses an inductive process because the focus is on the meanings individuals or groups attribute to problems (Creswell, 2013; Outhwaite & Tuner, 2007). With the

inductive method, researchers gather information about their topic before exploring theories that best explain aspects of the research topic (Outhwaite & Tuner, 2007), implying that knowledge and theories are developed from information gathered about the research topic. Qualitative research uses small samples for more in-depth explanations to a problem (Creswell, 2013; Outhwaite & Tuner, 2007). Researchers using the qualitative methods create research instruments like interview questions, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participant observation to collect data for analysis (Creswell, 2013; Outhwaite & Tuner, 2007).

This research approach is based on a case study of Tema. A case study approach entails an inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its natural setting (Noor, 2008; Zainal, 2007). The phenomenon being investigated can be a program, an event, an activity, a problem, and an individual or a group (Creswell, 2007; Harling, 2012). Researchers using the methodological approach of a case study collect in-depth and detailed data through multiple sources of information, including direct observation, participant observation, interviews, audio-visual material, documents, reports and physical artifacts (Harling, 2012). Because the case study method enables a researcher to examine the data within a specific context, the sample usually involves a limited number of individuals selected from a small geographical area (Harling, 2012). The census data provided by Ghana's Ministry of Education (2015) indicate that nationally, girls have a lower completion rate (70.6%) compared to boys (76.4%), thus, the study focused on investigating the reasons for the gender inequity in basic education in the Tema Metropolitan Area of Ghana (a metropolis in Ghana's capital region Accra). Through interviews and focus group discussions with policy administrators, educators, and parents, the study generated multiple sources of information to provide an in-depth picture of the gender differences in basic educational attainment.

The individual interviews and FGDs used for collecting data are methods associated with the case study approach in qualitative research (Noor, 2008; Zainal, 2007). The texts derived from the information by participants are analyzed using content analysis, defined as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use” (as cited in White & Marsh, 2006, p. 27). As a result, I created analytical categories through inferences from the transcribed text of the data to answer the research questions.

I adopted qualitative methods because quantitative data on gender and education in Ghana already exist. Some of these sources are United Nations statistics and the World Bank statistics on education. Additionally, the Ghana Ministry of Education has up-to-date census data on gender and basic education, as cited in Chapter Two (Tables 1.3 & 1.4, pp. 9-10). Another goal of this study is to explore the contextual complexities associated with education policies targeted at achieving gender equity. Qualitative methods are selected because the study aims to examine the experiences of policy administrators, educators, and parents through interviews and FGDs to generate the contextual complexities not captured by numerical data. The qualitative method aligns with the theoretical orientation of Black Feminist Thought and the purpose of the study – Ghana’s failure to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of gender equity in basic education. Black Feminist Thought emphasizes an in-depth understanding of experiences (Collins, 1989). Learning about the experiences of individuals or groups can produce alternative knowledge relevant to shaping more inclusive policy reforms.

Before the fieldwork, I reviewed published books and articles, as well as the sector performance reports and the statistics and planning parameters for basic education published by the government of Ghana. The study focused on the collation of census data on basic education by Ghana’s Ministry of Education. The census data is available through an open access file on

Ghana's Ministry of Education's website. The ministry also wrote comprehensive reports on basic schools from the 2001/2002 to the 2014/2015 academic years. In response to achieving the goals of the Millennium Declaration, Ghana drafted the 2003-2015 Education Strategic Plan (ESP). The ESP provides the framework and roadmap for achieving gender equity, so I analyzed the national census data on basic education from the 2004 to 2015 academic years. By comparing the gender differences in enrolment and completion rates and the policies, targets, and strategies outlined in the education plan, I designed the research questions for the interviews and FGDs.

#### **4.3 Participant Selection and Data Collection**

The study received approval from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) and assigned the code 17-129 by the University of Saskatchewan in May 2017. Operational consent was granted by the Tema district office of the Ghana Education Service in November 2017 after copies of the research proposal, the ethics approval document issued by the University of Saskatchewan, and proof of enrolment were submitted. Two instruments were designed for the data collection: in-depth interviews with policy administrators and educators and focus group discussions involving parents of children enrolled in public schools.

The participants were selected through purposive sampling, which involves a non-random selection, thus ensuring the representation of particular categories of cases within a sampling universe are in the final sample of a project (Robinson, 2014). I used purposive sampling because educators, policy officers at the Ghana Education Service, and parents have different and vital perspectives on the phenomena in question and their presence in the sample is relevant for understanding the impact of policies on gender regarding basic educational attainment.



A total of 24 respondents, all selected from the Tema Metropolitan Area in Ghana, participated. The Tema area is located in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. I chose Tema because I wanted the population sample for the research to represent a blend of the ethnic groups in Ghana because ethnic culture expressed through lineage systems (matrilineal or patrilineal kinship), traditional systems of inheritance and the kinds of bride price payments influence the life experiences and educational opportunities for girls. So, having an ethnically diverse sample was essential. Participants were recruited through letters of invitation and recruitment posters (Appendix A) submitted to their institutions of affiliation (Ghana Education Service and public schools). Fourteen interviews were conducted with educators and policy administrators, as well as two separate FGDs involving 10 parents. The 14 interviewees consisted of five policy officers at the Tema district of the GES and nine educators working in public schools. The GES officers that participated in the data collection include the Basic School Coordinator, Girls Education Officer, Early Childhood Education Coordinator, Guidance and Counselling Officer, and School Health Education Programme Coordinator. The nine educators consist of the headmistress and eight subject teachers at the Junior High School (JHS) level (Table 4.1). I chose to interview teachers at the JHS because that is the final level in basic education where there are challenging issues of retention and completion rates, especially for girls (Tables 1.3 & 1.4, pp. 9-10).

Policy experts at the Tema metropolis of the GES were given letters of invitation that explained the purpose and relevance of the study. The Ghana Education Service is the agency that oversees the basic and secondary education, including Technical and Vocational Institutes (Ministry of Education, 2003). Consequently, the experiences of the policy officers are relevant for understanding the gender inequity in basic educational attainment in Tema. Attached to the letters was a recruitment poster. After the participants received the invitation and agreed to be

part of the study, a suitable date and time were set up for the interviews. In advance of the interviews and before signing a consent form, the participants had the opportunity to read the form and discuss any concerns. The interviews were conducted on the GES premises, and each session lasted for about an hour and 30 minutes. Although participation was voluntary, respondents received compensation in the form of an honorarium for taking part in the research study. The honorarium was a token and offered to the respondents for their valuable time and efforts.

Educators were invited to participate in the study through a formal letter given to the school administrator along with a copy of the operational approval granted by the GES. The school administrator requested copies of the interview questions (Appendix C) for the teachers, so they were better informed about the purpose of the research. After the teachers were consulted about their voluntary participation, a date and time were scheduled for the interviews. Before interviews were conducted, participants read and signed the consent form, indicating that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were informed that their request to withdraw information from the study might not be possible if the data had been pooled and the analysis completed or if the thesis had been written or completed and disseminated. Interviews were conducted in the school library, which was a few blocks away from the classrooms. Most of the interviews with the educators lasted for an hour. All the interview participants agreed to review the interview transcript and sign the transcript release form for the research. The transcript review and release form were completed within a week after the interview. Below is a table that provides details about the interview participants.

Table 4.1

*Interview Participants' Information*

Participant Pseudonyms	Gender	Official Position	Years of Service
Afia	Female	Basic School Coordinator (Ghana Education Service)	30
Baaba	Female	Girls Education Officer (Ghana Education Service)	23
Esi	Female	Early Childhood Education Coordinator (Ghana Education Service)	15
Maame	Female	Guidance and Counselling Officer (Ghana Education Service)	21
Ama	Female	School Health Education Programme Coordinator (Ghana Education Service)	30
Kukua	Female	Headmistress (Tema Public School)	27
Gina	Female	Assistant Headmistress & Teaches French (Tema Public School)	20
Jane	Female	Teacher & Girl-Child Facilitator (Tema Public School)	17
Atta	Male	Teaches Science (Tema Public School)	23
Kosi	Male	Teaches Mathematics & Sports Coordinator (Tema Public School)	10
Miriam	Female	Teaches Religious and Moral Education (Tema Public School)	20
Amina	Female	Teaches Basic Design and Technology (Tema Public School)	18
Kofi	Male	Teaches Mathematics (Tema public school)	21
Akose	Female	Teaches English & School Secretary (Tema Public School)	13
Total	14		

During the fieldwork, I observed that female teachers numerically dominated in the public schools in the metropolis and were invited to participate. The school where I conducted

most of the in-depth interviews had 15 teachers in total – four males and 11 females. I asked about the predominance of female teachers in the metropolis at the office of the GES. I was informed that most of the men in the area were married to teachers, so they asked that their spouse be moved from other regions to join them. This may at least, partially account for the preponderance of female participants in the study.

In addition to interviews, data collection was through FGDs with parents of children enrolled in public schools in the Tema Metropolitan Area. All the Parents ( $N = 10$ ) in the study were accessed through the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in one public school within the district. The PTA is a voluntary organization that holds regular formal meetings organized by school administrators and attended by parents to discuss their students' performance and welfare, as well as educational programmes for improving student learning (personal communication, December 07, 2017). The parents often elect a chairperson to represent their interest in the meetings (personal communication, December 07, 2017). The school administrator called on the parents at their end of term meeting and shared the letter of invitation with the members. The researcher was later introduced to the parents for further discussions about their participation before FGDs were scheduled. Two separate focus groups were conducted at the school library. The first group consisted of six participants – four males and two females. The discussion lasted for two hours, with all participants having the opportunity to share their views and experiences about the impact of education policies on gender.

The second FGD included two males and two females. The lower number of parents in the second FGD was attributed to weak interest in PTA meetings as most of the children enrolled in the public school are distant relatives or domestic workers staying with guardians. The second FGD lasted for an hour and 20 minutes. The responses of the parents in the second FGD did not

vary from those of the first group, so there was no need to recruit more participants for another group discussion. The participants in the FGDs were compensated with refreshments and honoraria for transportation because they travelled from their respective homes to meet at the school premises for the discussion.

#### **4.4 Tools for Data Collection**

The interview and FGD questions used in the study were developed after reviewing the census data on basic school enrolment and completion rates by gender (Tables 1.3 & 1.4, pp. 9-10).

Other sources that shaped the tools for collecting data include the education sector performance report by Ghana's Ministry of Education and the Education Strategic Plan, which articulates the policies and strategies to increase access to and participation in education and provides girls with equal opportunities to access the full cycle of education (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Some of the critical questions in the interviews included the following: What factors influenced the current education policies? How are education programmes communicated to GES officers and educators? What are the considerations of the local context (cultural, religious and regional differences) to policy formation? What are the types of policy impact assessment conducted based on gender and the strategies to improve basic educational attainment for girls? (Appendix C). The FGD guide centred on questions about education for girls and boys, parents' knowledge of government policies, the impact of schooling on gender, and the role of the Parent-Teacher Association in promoting parental involvement in girls' education (Appendix C). In addition to the responses of the participants, the researcher's field notes and observations contributed to understanding the main challenges for gender equity in public education.

#### **4.5 Data Transcription, Coding, and Analysis**

The interviews and FGDs were audio-taped with a recorder; field notes were documented on a notepad. A mobile phone, an electronic notebook, and an external drive were also used. All the audio-recorded data were transcribed into text for analysis using a manual method of listening and writing. The resulting data were analyzed using content analysis.

Content analysis began as a methodology used for the study of mass communications in the 1950s (White & Marsh, 2006). Researchers made inferences to analyze recurring and easily identifiable text content based on fundamental communication models of the sender, message, and receiver/audience (White & Marsh, 2006). Other researchers in fields like anthropology, political science, psychology, and sociology have since adopted the use of the process of content analysis. However, over the years, the method has been adapted to address research questions through “techniques and approaches for analyzing text grouped under the broad term of textual analysis” (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 23). Webber (1990) outlined the purpose of content analysis, which includes the goal to reveal the focus of individuals, groups, institutional or societal attention in order to highlight their cultural patterns.

In view of the aims of this study to identify the perspective of the participating groups (policy officers, educators, and parents), three thematic categories were generated from the information provided by the respondents after saturated points of response were reached. Phrases like: family structure, cultural traditions, parents level of education, hostile home environment, domestic help, house chores, paid labour, internet exposure, marriage, lack of logistics, struggle to buy books, no classroom chairs and tables, no laboratories, bureaucracy, misleading policies, projects abandoned when voted out of power, damaged toilet facilities, unpaid school utility bills, high school levies, politicians failing in their responsibilities, negative impact of foreign

culture, girls promiscuity, pregnancy, no sanitary towels, sexual advances at female students, puberty rites, lack of funds etc. – were common issues raised by participants. Based on shared understanding, the responses were categorized into three thematic categories – socio-cultural, economic, and political. The classification of the transcribed text into thematic categories is a useful procedure when using content analyses (Webber, 1990). Thematic categories, as applied, are “a group of content that shares a commonality” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003, p. 107). Through the development of categories, the researcher validates the data. Validity in this context refers to the extent to which the measuring procedure (thematic categorization) reflects the concepts being measured (White & Marsh, 2006).

Three thematic categories were identified: socio-cultural barriers, economic challenges, and political interference. Under the thematic category identified as socio-cultural barriers were responses like early marriage, teenage pregnancy, son-preference, broken homes, sexual-harassment, and traditional cultural practices to the questions about the gender inequity in basic education and the challenges for girls. Under the economic challenges were grouped responses such as parental poverty, the lack of school textbooks and teaching materials, girls engaging in paid labour, poor school infrastructure, and inadequate school resources. Finally, under the category of political interference were grouped the concerns about the politicization of education policy, discontinuation in policy implementation by policymakers, partisan politics, and the lack of political will by policymakers to fund education policies.

After critically analyzing the text and coding the participants’ response into the three thematic categories, a mark was assigned to every factor that accounts for the current gender inequity in basic public education. The responses were counted and recorded in each category before being imported into an Excel sheet to generate charts and graphs. Charts and graphs are

effective when articulating the findings from policy-relevant research (Costanza, Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1993). By grouping the data into three thematic categories, I converted the participants' responses into percentages and graphs (Chapter 5) to make the results understandable to decision makers and stakeholders. Although the study used qualitative methods for data collection, the findings were quantified to clearly articulate the perspective of the participants, including policy officers, educators, and parents. Although the content analysis may focus on either quantitative or qualitative aspects of communication messages (Berg, 2001), including both quantitative and qualitative data in a case study helps explain the process and outcome of a phenomenon through observation, and analysis of the cases under investigation (Noor, 2008; Zainal, 2007). I decided to incorporate both because the quantitative analysis determines specific frequencies of relevant categories based on the participant responses (Berg, 2001).

NVivo, the qualitative software programme, was used to create a word map (Appendix D) based on the participants' responses. The word map is a display of the most frequent words used by the participants. With content analysis, words are the symbolic units of analysis that are value-laden (White & Marsh, 2006). The Nvivo programme also assisted in organizing a word cluster analysis (Appendix D) based on the data transcript. The cluster analysis visually displays groups of words that co-occur or are frequently used by the same source. Words (concepts) and how they co-occur (pattern) in the data validate the categorization scheme used in the study.

#### **4.6 Ethical Considerations**

The data collected is stored in a password-protected file and uploaded to the researcher's electronic cabinet. All official documents (hard copies) are in a locked filing cabinet kept by the principal investigator (PI). According to the University of Saskatchewan ethics' policies, five



years after completion of the study, hard copies of research documents and files will be shredded, and the electronic ones deleted from stored computers.

The findings of the research build on the existing knowledge about gender and education policies in Ghana. The participants were informed that the research data are for academic purposes, as indicated in the consent forms (Appendix B), so, apart from being used in this study, the research findings will be used in publications – both in leading Ghanaian and international journals – to encourage and inform academic and policy debate on gender equity in public education.

Although there are no direct beneficiaries, the study offers new insights, and the findings provide recommendations to guide urgent policy reforms, so Ghana can do better in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, a follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals. It is hoped that the findings of the study will ignite the policy debate on how best to address gender inequity in Ghana's public education sector. To stimulate discursive dialogue on the topic, the research results will be shared with the Ghana Education Service, Ghana's Ministry of Education, the public schools in the Tema metropolis, the Parent-Teacher Association of the participants and educators, and the mass media. A copy of the thesis will be available at the University of Saskatchewan and the International Development Research Agency (IDRA) of Canada, which funded the research through a doctoral research award.

Several other factors were taken into consideration in the study, including the potential for risk and anonymity. There were no risks involved as the participants were assured that the study is purely academic and policy-oriented and not politically motivated. Also, the participants were reminded during the data collection process to respond to only questions they are comfortable with answering. The anonymity of the participants was of utmost importance in the

study. Participants' anonymity was maintained using pseudonyms in the write-up of the data analysis. Having the insider status was instrumental in building a good rapport. Consequently, all interviews and FDGs were conducted in an open and friendly atmosphere without any form of coercion.

#### **4.7 Problems Encountered During the Fieldwork**

The major problems encountered in the data collection process included the unspecified information about and timeframe required for filing an operational consent in Ghana. The process took three weeks with regular follow-up visits to the Tema district office of the GES. Another challenge was finding a suitable location to interview officers at the GES. The respondents preferred to be interviewed in their offices, but the workspace was shared with other colleagues, so we had to find an alternative location to avoid distractions. I noticed that the office spaces lacked decent work desks and chairs. There were no fans, computers, and printers in the offices. Most of the interviews were conducted under trees near the GES building. The flow of the interview sessions was interrupted by several distractions by food vendors and visitors at the GES premises, as well as the sounds of moving vehicles. In speaking about the difficulties in finding a suitable space for the primary data collection, the interview participants emphasized the lack of decent office amenities and the unfavourable working conditions. A third challenge concerned access to parents through the Parent-Teacher Association. Only a few parents responded to the Parent-Teacher Association meeting invitations. Although 10 parents participated in the two separate focus group discussions, attendance at the initial meeting to discuss the purpose of the study and data collection was lower than expected. Most of the students enrolled in public schools in the area are living with extended family or guardians,

which, according to the headmistress and the chair of the Parent-Teacher Association confirmed the low interest in the meeting.

#### **4.8 Limitations of the Study**

The first limitation is the research design. Although qualitative methods generate detailed descriptions of social phenomena, the sample size in such studies is relatively small (Creswell, 2013) so, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to the entire population (Creswell, 2013). Although the results cannot be generalized to represent the views of the larger population of parents, educators and policy officers at the Ghana Education Service, the 24 research participants provided a more in-depth understanding of the impact of education policies on gender in public schools in the Tema district of Ghana.

Another limitation of the study is time constraints. Qualitative methods allow for in-depth inquiry and exploration through interviews and focus group discussions, so the technique is time-consuming. Considering that the study is a thesis and has been completed as an academic requirement for the doctoral degree in sociology, there was insufficient time to conduct individual interviews and focus group discussions in other public schools in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana besides the Tema metropolis (the research site). The findings of the perceptions of parents, educators, and policy officers regarding the impact of education policies on gender are local views of the research problem. To this end, the experiences of the participants may not represent the regional or national perception about the impact of current education policies on gender in Ghana.

#### **4.9 Summary**

This chapter has provided details of the study's research methodology. To address the research questions, the study relied on qualitative methods. Before the primary data collection, a critical

review of Ghana's Education Strategic Plan was conducted, and books and journal articles on the research topic were consulted. As well, census data on the enrolment and completion rate by Ghana's Ministry of Education was examined. After these reviews, questions were framed to guide individual interviews and focus group discussions.

A total of 14 interviews were conducted with nine educators and five policy officers. Two focus group discussions were held with the parents of the children enrolled in public schools located in the Tema Metropolitan Area of Ghana (10 participants in total). The participants were selected based on purposive sampling because they have important views about and experiences with the research topic. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were free to withdraw from the study. The participants gave their approval by signing the consent and the transcript release forms. To maintain participant anonymity, pseudonyms were used in the write-up of the data analysis. Although participants received an honorarium, this award did not appear to influence their decision to participate. The amount was a token of appreciation and cannot be equated with the participants' valuable time and effort in contributing to data collection.

Coding and data analysis were done through content analysis. The NVivo qualitative software programme was used to create a word map and a word cluster analysis. All official documents (hard copies) are stored in a lock filing cabinet, where they will remain until five years after the completion of the study. At that point, all hard copy documents and files will be shredded and electronic files deleted from computers.

Through individual interviews and focus group discussions, the study obtained detailed information and insights about education policies and gender in the Tema district of Ghana. The qualitative research method aligned with the objectives of the study: to seek the perceptions of

policy experts, educators, and parents about the impact of current education policies on gender equity and to recommend policy based on the information gathered from the participants. The challenges experienced during the fieldwork include the unspecified timeframe for filing for the local ethics in Ghana, suitable places for conducting interviews and the low response of parents for Parent-Teacher Association meetings. The limitations of the study include a small sample size, and a sample restricted to two schools, limiting the generalizability of the results. Another limitation includes time constraints.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH RESULTS**

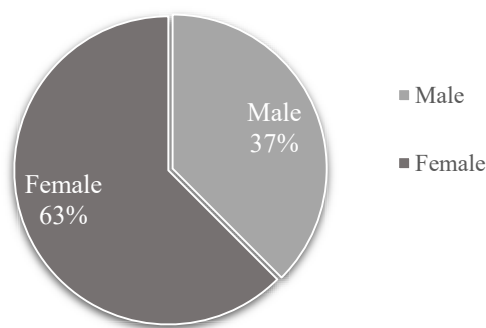
### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the research findings and shows how responses were grouped into thematic categories and meaningful relationships. The purpose of the study is to examine the reasons and explanations for the failure of the Ghanaian government's education policies and practices in achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of gender equity in basic education. By using charts, the findings highlight the perspectives of parents, officers at Ghana Education Service (GES), and educators on gender inequity in basic education, as well as challenges for girls in public schools in the Tema Metropolitan Area of Ghana. To better understand both the context and the issue of gender inequity in Ghana's basic education, other aspects of the study are discussed: gender differences within the research sample, education policy formation and evaluation, increases in the Capitation Grant, and the role of educators, GES officers, and parents. The research questions that informed how the findings are presented in this chapter include the following:

1. How have current education policies and practices influenced girls' enrolment and completion rates?
2. What are the perceptions and experiences of policy administrators, educators, and parents regarding gender inequity in basic education in Ghana?
3. What do these perceptions and experiences reveal about how education policies, programmes, and practices can be enhanced so that school retention and completion rates of girls improve?

## 5.2 Population Sample and Participant Responses to Questions about Gender Inequity in Public Schools at the Basic Level in Ghana

The sample ( $N = 24$ ) comprises policy officers at the GES, educators, and parents of children enrolled in a public school in the Tema Metropolitan Area of Ghana. Although gender specificity was not part of the selection criteria, nine men participated in the data collection process compared to 15 women. Figure 5.1 depicts the gender distribution of research participants.



*Figure 5.1. Gender Distribution for the Research Sample ( $N = 24$ )*

The majority of the participants were female (63%) because female educators and policy officers predominated at the research site. According to both the School Health Education Programme (SHEP) Coordinator and the Girls Education Officer, the reason for the high number of women in these roles is that many had moved from other regions to join their husbands. Noting that many of the GES professionals had worked there for 20 years, Ama, the SHEP Coordinator, put it this way: “You only see more female teachers in urban areas. When you get to the hinterland, there are more male teachers. The reason is most of the female teachers moved to join their husbands in the urban center.” The Girls Education Officer, Baaba made a similar observation:

Because the female teachers moved to join their husbands. In rural communities, you will see only male teachers. In my former district, which was remote communities, only male teachers work there. So, most of the Girl-Child Facilitators were male teachers because we could not find female teachers to take up the position.

The gender of the participants may have influenced their perspectives on gender inequity in Ghana's basic schools, but the study sought to seek expert views and experiences from participants. The subsequent discussion focuses on the perceptions and experiences of policy administrators, educators, and parents regarding the challenges for girls in public schools and the gender inequity in basic educational attainment in the Tema area.

#### **5.2.1 Perceptions of policy officers: the reasons for gender inequity in public schools in Tema, Ghana.**

This section explores the reasons given by policy officers for gender inequity in basic educational attainment in public schools in Ghana. The five policy officers include the Basic School Coordinator, the Girls Education Officer, the Early Childhood Education Coordinator, the Guidance and Counselling Officer, and the School Health Education Program Coordinator. Figure 5.2 shows the frequency of these reasons or factors given by the participants according to the three thematic categories – socio-cultural barriers, economic challenges and political interference.

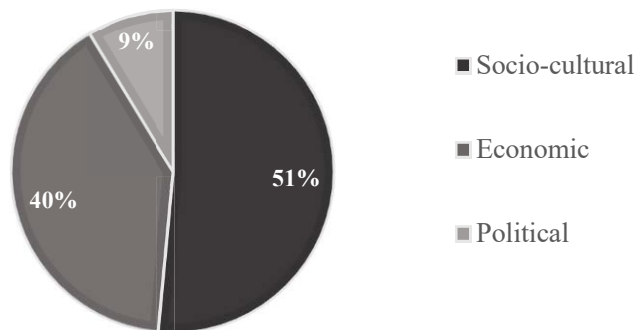
**Socio-cultural barriers:** Socio-cultural reasons mentioned by the policy officers that interfere with girls' education include the following. First, there is a preference for sons that results in parents favouring the education of their sons. Second, there is the cultural expectation that girls will end up getting married and taking care of the home. In view of these expectations,



girls are burdened with domestic chores as well as with providing care for their young siblings. Related reasons include early marriage and teenage pregnancy. Others include sexual harassment by male members of the household and the community, broken homes, and single parenting. Other factors in this category that affect girls' education are ethnic-cultural practices like the *Trokosi* (a practice that involves parents giving a virgin daughter to serve in a traditional shrine to atone for the social violations of male family members), *Dipo* and *Bragoro* (two sets of puberty rites that initiate girls into womanhood), and *Kpojiemor* (the practice of gift-giving to new mothers). Another factor is the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), which is used to prepare girls for early marriage and to ensure they remain faithful wives.

Economic challenges: Based on the responses of policy officers, poverty tends to exacerbate socio-cultural factors. For example, according to policy officers, parental poverty leads girls to work as domestic servants to augment family income. Also, policy officers mentioned that marital breakdown and single parenting hurt girls without means as they may be forced to engage in sexual relationships with men for money. Other economic factors are a lack of funds to support the Girls Education Unit (GES) and limited resources to improve school infrastructure. Insufficient resources create other problems. For example, inadequate toilet facilities persuade girls to stay home from school during their menstrual period. Frequent absences for reasons such as these lead to poor performance and a high drop-out rate.

Political interference: The policy officers indicated that politicization of education policies and partisan politics interrupt the required reforms to close the gender gap.



*Figure 5.2. The Response of Policy Officers about the Reasons for Gender Inequity in Public Basic Education*

According to the policy officers, the key factors resulting in gender inequity in basic education are socio-cultural, representing 51% of the responses. Economic problems (40%) are the second causative factor for gender inequity in public schools at the basic level. Political interferences (9%) were only occasionally identified as influencing the gender inequity in basic education attainment, as indicated in Figure 5.2.

### **5.2.2 Perceptions of educators: the reasons for gender inequity in public schools in Tema, Ghana.**

Figure 5.3 depicts the responses of the educators about the reasons for the gender inequity in public schools in Ghana. The educators ( $N = 9$ ) discussed the following socio-cultural, economic, and political factors as the critical barriers to gender equity in basic educational attainment in the Tema area of Ghana.

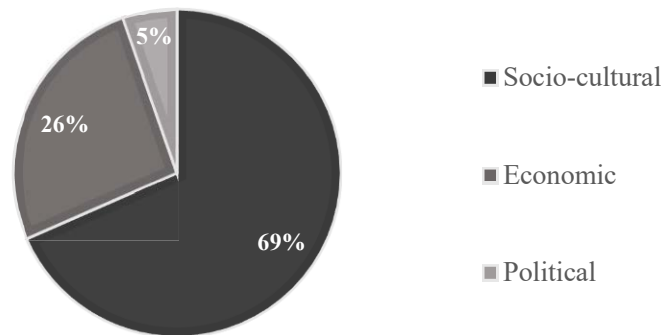
**Socio-cultural barriers:** Based on the experiences of the educators, broken homes lead to some parents sending their girl-children to live with other families in the city as domestic servants. Others also give their daughters in early marriage so that parents can profit from the payment of the bride price. Cultural expectations reveal that the ultimate goal for girls is to be

married and take care of the home, and these expectations influence parental decisions regarding their daughters' education. A consequence of these expectations is that girls are socialized to believe a man will take care of them when they get married, minimizing their focus on attaining an education. The educators also indicated that a further cultural barrier is a preference for sons, especially for families with financial difficulties. Other social factors mentioned were lack of parental care, poverty, and peer pressure lead to teenage pregnancy. Pregnant girls tend to drop out of school to find a trade so they can care for their baby. Finally, the educators pointed out that ethnic-cultural practices like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), which is meant to prepare girls for early marriage and the *Trokosi* tradition, are barriers to girls' education in Ghana.

Economic challenges: The educators stressed that the main reason that girls are sent away to work as domestic servants is parental poverty; parents may perceive that their daughters are better off with their employers, who often finance their education. At the national level, the educators referred to issues such as the lack of resources and learning materials and untimely distribution of school grants, all of which negatively affect girls' education compared to boys.

Political interference: Some of the educators indicated that education policies are often political tools for winning the votes and elections in order for candidates to boast that they have achieved universal basic education for Ghana. Thus, these educators perceived a lack of political will on the part of the government to make funds available to implement policies effectively. Consequently, they indicated that there is low parental support because of the "free education" propagated by the government. They suggested that most parents are not willing to pay school levies, so this parental decision push girls to engage in intimate relationships with men for financial support. Finally, some educators indicated that changes in government lead to new

political appointments in the education sector, which halt the continuing of initiatives to achieve universal basic education.



*Figure 5.3. The Response of Educators about the Reasons for Gender Inequity in Public Basic Education*

As evident in Figure 5.3, based on the educators' responses, the most common (69%) challenges girls face are socio-cultural, and political interference (5%) is the least likely to have been cited as having an impact. Next to socio-cultural factors, economic factors (26%) are the second most cited reasons by educators for gender inequity in basic education in public schools in the Tema Metropolitan Area.

### **5.2.3 Perceptions of parents: the reasons for gender inequity in public schools in Tema, Ghana.**

Figure 5.4 depicts the perceptions of parents ( $N = 10$ ) regarding gender inequity in public schools in the Tema metropolis of Ghana. Interestingly, the parents provided different responses than the policy officers and educators about the reasons for gender inequity in basic educational attainment in public schools, with more reasons grouped under the political and economic categories and fewer under the socio-cultural category.

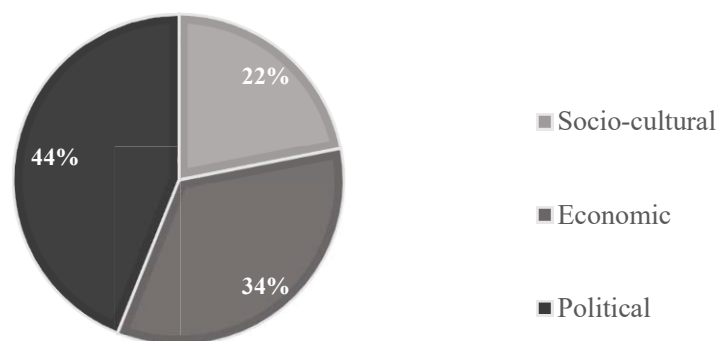
**Socio-cultural barriers:** For parents, son preference influences the decisions about their children's education because of their concerns that their daughters might get pregnant while in

school or, more likely, will end up taking care of their husband's home. The parents indicated that girls are socialized to believe men are available to take care of them, so they do not strive to achieve a good education. According to the parents, other social challenges like broken homes and a dysfunctional family structure affect girls' academic performance compared to boys, so they drop out of school. Due to the gender expectations defined by the culture, the parents said that girls are burdened with household chores as many enrolled in the public school also work as domestic servants. The parents suggested that girls' education is affected by time constraints since their guardians are not invested in their schooling. They also indicated that because the burden of domestic chores falls on girls, their commitment to education declines. Other social problems like the high level of uneducated women in Ghana was also mentioned as having an impact on girls' education because most mothers will encourage their daughters to assist them in trading instead of supporting them in focusing on schooling.

Economic challenges: According to the parents, the inadequate toilet facilities used by students and teachers mainly affects girls, who often stay away from school during their menstrual period. The parents stated that frequent absences from school lead to a higher drop-out rate for girls compared to boys. Parents also cited the limited school resources, including textbooks and school desks for students as exacerbating commitment issues among the students, especially the girls, most of whom work as domestic servants.

Political interference: According to the parents, interference occurs at the highest level of partisan politics in Ghana and deters the government from committing to the provisions stipulated under the education policies. The parents claim the policy labelled "free education" is misleading because the resources promised by the government are not provided. They added that because most girls work as domestic servants, they cannot afford the school textbooks and other

learning materials required for their education. Since parents in low-income families shirk their responsibilities because of the government’s propaganda of “free education,” girls are mostly affected by cultural norms that put males first. The parents also noted that the bureaucratic system denies head teachers a voice in education policy formation, so the challenges associated with achieving the universal basic education submitted through annual school reports are not considered. In addition to the alienation of educators from the policy formation process, parents lament that the incumbent government’s politically motivated implementation of policies in their electoral strongholds compared to other regions detracts from the goal of universal basic education. Finally, the parents mentioned the media’s alliance with the government produces a biased report on the impact of education policies, so the challenges girls face in school are not addressed.



*Figure 5.4. The Response of the Parents about the Reasons for Gender Inequity in Public Basic Education*

As shown in Figure 5.4, parents expressed sentiments different from those of the educators and policy officers. For the parents, political interference (44%) is more frequently cited as having an impact on girls’ schooling than socio-cultural and economic factors. Compared with educators and policy officers, parents were less likely to cite socio-cultural factors (22%) as barriers to education. Comparing the various responses by the participants (parents, educators, and policy officers), in the economic category, there were fewer differences

in opinions on the degree to which economic challenges was a causative factor for gender inequity in Ghana's public schools: 40% of the factors provided by policy officers were economic, 26% of those provided by educators, and 34% of those provided by parents.

Policy officers and educators both cited socio-cultural barriers as dominant deterrents to gender equity in basic educational attainment. Because they work for the government, they may be less likely to be critical of the political interferences that affect educational programmes and that may persuade parents to favour educating their sons over their daughters. When school grants are consistently delayed, which, according to the policy officers and educators affects low-income families the most as they are the beneficiaries of public education, most low-income families choose to educate their male children due to the cultural notion of son-preference.

Parents were least likely to cite socio-cultural factors, perhaps because they benefit economically when girls are married early through the bride price payments. Additionally, there are economic implications for parents who send their daughters away as domestic servants to other families due to poverty. Based on the cultural notion of son-preference, emphasized by the parents, families with scarce resources struggle to provide girls with equal opportunity. Danso, a parent in the focus group, put it this way:

When parents have many children and cannot afford to pay schools fees for all, they will prefer the boys to attend school because the girls will eventually get married. So, when girls are taken to school, it is not a good investment as they might end up getting pregnant or in the kitchen of their husband.

The cultural context is relevant to understanding why parents are less likely than policy officers and educators to cite socio-cultural factors and more likely to cite the politicization of education programmes and partisan politics. These parents believe that political decisions impact parental

choice regarding the education of boys and girls, especially among low-income households with large families.

### **5.3 The Response of Policy Officers and Educators to Questions about Policy Formation, Implementation, and Evaluation**

In addition to presenting the views of the participants about the impact of education policies on gender, this section provides information about the policy formation process, implementation, and evaluation. Understanding the process of policy formation, implementation, and evaluation may clarify the reasons for the continuous gender differences in basic educational attainment in public schools. The opinions of educators and policy officers were sought regarding how policies are formed, how the government involves stakeholders, and how education policies are evaluated.

In response to how teachers and GES officials are involved in policy formation, policy officers and educators' provided several views. Baaba, a policy officer, highlighted their formal roles:

The GES has a director general, other deputies, divisional heads and curriculum developers. These officials come together to assist the government on education policy formation by identifying the challenges and how best to solve these challenges in the education sector. Teachers are involved through the National Association of Teachers (NAT), the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) and a new third force called the Coalition of Concerned Teachers.

Maame, another policy officer, emphasized their roles as implementers of policy:



We are implementers. As implementers, we receive the policies drawn on paper, and they inform us of what we are expected to do, and we move to implementation by organizing workshops for teachers and put together seminars for students as well.

Amina, an educator, stressed that teachers were sometimes blamed for policies that they had no role in formulating:

The GES Council collaborates with the government to formulate policies. After, teachers are asked to implement these policies [...] Considering the process of all these education policy issues they are always quick to blame teachers for the low performance and, yet they do not involve us in decisions that will benefit all.

Going by the response of the policy officers and educators, the policy formation process does not include those who work at the grassroots level. Policy officers perceive their role as implementers of educational programmes. Educators, on the other hand, are represented by leaders of the national association of teachers in Ghana. The policy officers and educators expressed a sense of alienation from the policy formation process.

When asked about how policies are communicated to teachers, the participants indicated by in-service training and workshops, although the educators maintained that teachers are not always notified in time and that the dissemination is ineffective. Amina, an educator, mentioned how training is conducted for teachers after new education policies are implemented:

They do organize workshops for us to be trained when the government wants to introduce changes in the education sector. When it comes to implementing

policy, they organize training for the head teachers, and then subsequently it trickles down to the teachers.

Another educator, Kosi, spoke about the hierarchical fashion of training when it comes to new education programmes for teachers:

After policies are formulated, instructions on implementation are given to the district education office. Through the district office, the various units in the metropolis are informed [...] The metro officers conduct in-service training for teachers on policy implementation.

Although the Ghana Education Service (GES) organizes workshops for educators based on a hierarchical approach, Akose, an educator, indicated that information dissemination is ineffective, negatively impacting training opportunities after new educational programmes are outlined:

Information dissemination is poor. By the time information reaches us, the date for training might have passed, and so you must consult other teachers that were informed in time and had the chance to attend such training for guidance.

As these responses indicate, implementation changes generally occur in a hierarchical fashion, with the district education office informing units, who then arrange for in-service training. This training, often announced at short notice, might be held only for head teachers. Other teachers depend on these head teachers for information. Thus, the communication of policy changes could be improved.

In addition to the communication of education policies, also key to educational reform is programme evaluation. The participants spoke about the use of reports for policy evaluation and the School Performance Appraisal Meeting (SPAM) for

educators. Kosi, an educator, responded to questions about evaluation this way: “We conduct the School Performance Appraisal Meeting, which includes the submission of detailed reports. We provide detailed reports of policy implementation and list the resources we need to ensure effective implementation.”

In addition to the School Performance Appraisal Meetings and reports by educators, policy officers contributed to policy evaluation. Esi, an Early Childhood Education Coordinator, spoke about writing reports: “We submit monthly reports to the headquarters. Based on our reports, the government can derive whatever information they need regarding the impact of a policy.” From the perspective of Maame, a Guidance and Counselling Officer, the evaluation of policy regarding gender includes reporting on girls’ enrolment, retention, and completion: “We observe the enrolment of girls, their continuation, and the number that complete the cycle of basic education.” Based on the experiences of educators and policy officers, then, the government evaluates the existing policies through performance appraisal meetings, monthly reports, and enrolment and completion rates.

The Capitation Grant, one of the policies reviewed in this study, was increased by over 100% in the 2018 national budget (Government of Ghana, 2017). The Capitation Grant Scheme was implemented in 2005 to abolish tuition in public schools at the basic level (Adamu-Issah et al., 2007; Ministry of Education, 2012). The government of Ghana was previously paying USD 1.21 per pupil for the academic year so that public schools could provide all children access to a full cycle of basic education (Adamu-Issah et al., 2007; Ministry of Education, 2012). Although the policy officers and educators complained about late disbursement, they acknowledged that the current government had increased the grant by 100% (USD 2.41). Consequently, it was

imperative to ask participants about their impressions of the rise in the Capitation Grant, which plays a vital role in access and retention in Ghana's public schools. Baaba, a Girls Education Officer, made this comment: "I will say that is good news, but what I am concerned about is some of the Capitation Grant should be geared towards gender issues in the schools and at the district level." Based on this response, it seems that the Girls Education Unit in the Tema district is underfunded, hence the need to allocate some of the funds through the Capitation Grant to support the work of the unit that deals with gender issues. Esi, an Early Childhood Education Coordinator, also spoke of the increase in the capitation grant:

The Capitation Grant is used for a lot of things. Usually, once the school purchase a few school supplies then the grant is used up and then we wait until the next trench is disbursed. This was affecting education because teachers need Teaching-Learning Materials to do their jobs effectively. If there are no teaching materials, this does not help because teaching in the abstract is not effective. So, I thank God that the grant has been increased.

The Capitation Grant is used for purchasing Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs), which are essential for retaining students in school as most of the beneficiaries of the public schools are from low-income families.

Several educators expressed serious concerns about the time involved to allocate and distribute schools grants. Gina, an assistant headmistress of the public school where I conducted my interviews, indicated that "the grant is not distributed in time," adding that "a timely release of the resources is important" to "ensure students benefit from the government's policy for free basic education." Amina, a teacher, echoed Gina's views,

indicating that the late distribution of school grants constitutes challenges for the public schools in the district:

This increment is only good news when grants are administered in time. I say this because we need this money to run the school. So, the grant must come in time for there to be an impact. An increase with the same approach of late disbursement, then there will be challenges.

A Religious and Moral Education (RME) teacher, Miriam, confirmed that the increase in the Capitation Grant is good news for public education, but again her concerns included late distribution of funds:

The capitation grant is helping. However, our challenge is that the grant is not disbursed on time. We must mobilize some internally generated funds to run the school while we wait for the school grants to come. The focus here must be the timely redistribution of resources by the government.

The responses of the educators and policy officers about the increase in the Capitation Grant explain the challenges with policy implementation. Although the government creates the academic calendar for the school year, it struggles to distribute school grants in time. When public schools are underfunded, student commitment declines, and high drop-out rates result. According to a Basic School Coordinator, Afia, concerns about underfunding will be alleviated with the increase in the Capitation Grant: “With the increase now head teachers can buy the various materials needed for the school as well as the needs of students. When students come to school, and their needs are met, they would not have any reason to drop-out.” As this participant indicated, the grant could have a major impact on meeting student needs, thus eliminating students’ reasons for dropping out of school.

Despite the good news about the increase in the Capitation Grant, both the policy officers and educators expressed a sense of alienation from the policy formation process and implementation. The participants maintained that the government only involved the leadership of the GES officers and representatives of the national associations for teachers in the policy process. As indicated above, in addition to feeling alienated, educators struggled with inadequate training and the timely release of school grants to help administer lessons and make teaching and learning materials available. As a result, educators were not completely committed to Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education.

#### **5.4 The Response of Parents to Questions about Policy and Girls' Education**

To understand gender inequity in public education in the Tema metropolis, the views of parents are as important as those of policy workers and educators. In this study, parents were asked about policies, the work of female teachers, parental involvement in girls' education, and the role of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in gender-related issues. When asked how they hear about education policies, Danso, one of the parents, had this response:

In the news and political platforms. We hear on the radio that there is free education, free books, free that. Although the books and other resources promised by the government are not provided, it is always being said on the radio.

Other parents had similar responses, indicating that the mass media is the main communication channel for information on education policies.

The role of female teachers is a significant part of this study. As mentioned, at the school where the research was conducted, female teachers predominated; as a result, their role in girls' education in the district was important to explore. Also, 154 girls and 136 boys were enrolled in

the Junior High School, where most of the individual interviews with educators and focus group meetings with parents were held. Parents expressed a positive correlation between the presence of female teachers and the academic performance of girls. Ali, one of the parents, spoke of the positive impact of female teachers: “The predominance of female teaching staff influences the girls’ performance. The female students can relate with their teachers [more] than in the past when males dominated the teaching staff.” Another parent, Foli, also spoke about female teachers as role models: “Female teachers who have experienced life try to guide the girls and encourage them to act right.” For Thomas, a parent who works as a teacher in a different public school in the metropolis, the presence of female teachers is a source of inspiration for girls to achieve their goals: “The presence of female teachers inspire the girls to believe that they can achieve their goals and even excel.” However, one parent, Tiwa, added a caveat: “If girls get close to the female teachers, they perform well. But when the teacher does not care about whatever is going on, then student performance will come down.” These interview excerpts all indicate the importance of female teachers as role models for girls in school but, as Tiwa, suggests, these teachers must exhibit a caring attitude to be effective.

Although female teachers have their role to play, parents must equally contribute if there are to be changes in gender inequity in basic educational attainment in Ghana. When parents were asked about their role in their children’s education, especially their daughters, they made the following comments. Kwame maintained, “Encouragement is good. Most of our old ladies have not been to school, so the problem is they do not support girls’ education because girls will end up being married.” Besides the impact of low education among women, which leads to a poor support for girls, Ali expressed the need for parental involvement and civic education: “Parental involvement is an area that needs major improvement in Ghana. If you go to private

schools, parents pay more tuition. So, they invest in the welfare of their children.” For parental involvement to improve, Danso suggested, “It is time for some parents to be educated because they do not support their children to study at home but to perform house chores.” Danso added, “For basic education, all parents must contribute to the welfare of their children.” These comments indicate that the role of parents – particularly mothers – is critical in supporting girls’ education. As the second extract indicates, parents who pay private tuition are more likely to support their children’s education. All the participants indicated that parents need to become more involved in and supportive of their children’s education.

Finally, the collaboration between educators and parents through the work of the PTA is critical to basic educational attainment of girls. The parents suggested that western cultural influences entice girls because of the current wave of social media, so they are more likely to lose focus on school and may have a tendency to become promiscuous. Ali, the PTA chair, put it this way: “Most of the gender issues are related to promiscuity. The girls are very fast in the area. That is a major problem.” Other parents in the focus group indicated that social media and television, both of which are dominated by foreign culture, have negatively influenced the girls. Kwame indicated, “The influence of foreign cultures through our television programming is a big issue,” adding that “girls are more socially active than boys.” Thomas, another parent, shared similar views about the social media and television programming in Ghana: “When girls get exposed to the content on social media and television programming, some of their attention is diverted from education.” These responses indicate the negative impact of foreign culture through social media and television programmes, which is specifically distracting for girls, reduces their interest in school and perhaps promotes promiscuity. There may be a negative



relationship between the use of social media and girls' educational attainment in the Tema Metropolitan Area.

## **5.5 Summary**

This chapter has reported the study's findings. Although there were more female participants than male, the study did not purposefully select more females to participate in the data collection. From the perceptions and experiences of educators and policy officers, the significant challenges to girls' education are socio-cultural barriers. Perhaps because educators and policy officers are government employees, they were less critical of political interference, citing mainly socio-cultural factors and economic problems as the reasons for gender inequity in basic educational attainment. The parents were more vocal about political interference, citing this as a major reason for the stifling of girls' progress in education in public schools. Since most parents benefit economically by enabling and encouraging their daughters to work as domestic servants or from bride price payments, they were perhaps less likely to cite socio-cultural factors as barriers to gender equity at the basic level in public education.

Insights like the alienation of policy officers and educators from policy formation, poorly structured policy training, and the late distribution of the Capitation Grant are critical to the discussion of the ineffectiveness of existing policies, which I analyze in detail in the next chapter. Finally, important relationships, like the correlation between female teachers and girls' education, the cultural perceptions of gender, and the impact of social media on the basic educational attainment of girls, will form the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses in detail the major themes from the data, which include socio-cultural, economic, and political factors. Socio-cultural barriers are analyzed from social and indigenous cultural perspectives. Economic challenges are explored based on family and national dimensions. Political interference frames the education policies and politicization of education in Ghana. The intersections within the thematic categories of the findings are highlighted. As well, the research results are connected to the study's theoretical framework.

### **6.2 Socio-Cultural Barriers to Girls' Education**

This theme consists of social and cultural barriers that respondents indicated contribute to the lower school retention and completion rates of girls. The social factors include broken homes, mothers' educational levels, teenage pregnancy, sexual harassment and abuse, domestic servitude and caring for younger siblings, the impact of social media, and lack of self-control. According to respondents, broken or dysfunctional homes have a more detrimental effect on girls and their schooling than on boys. Girls tend to lose focus when they come from dysfunctional homes. As noted by Dora, an active member of the Parent-Teacher Association, girls' academic performance suffers when they come from a broken home:

A girl came to me during one of our meetings in the school and reported that she could not study because her mother and father are always fighting. When she is in school, her focus is on the tension at home. So, the family setting is important.

Sam, a parent with marital issues commented on the effect of family dysfunction on girls, using his daughter as an example. His views are noteworthy as his family contains a blend: three boys and two girls:

When mum and dad are good, and everything is nice at home, the children do well. Using myself as an example, I came out of a lucrative job with good financial benefits because of health issues. However, my wife wanted me to work for an additional five years despite my health challenges. As a result, there is tension at home due to my wife's unsupportive decision. The situation at home started affecting my eldest daughter. One of my sisters, who works as a teacher, was willing to take on the responsibility of training my daughter because of the hostile environment in my home. In truth, my daughter's academic performance has significantly improved since she moved.

Thus, according to parents, dysfunctional homes, unsurprisingly, have negative implications for girls' education.

In addition to dysfunctional homes, a factor in girls' low educational attainment was the mothers' low educational level, which parents maintained has a greater impact on girls than boys because, in Ghana, women, in general, have lower literacy rates. Based on the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS) in 2014, 24.3% of females have never attended school compared to 14.6% males. Ali, a parent, put it in this way:

Most of the women in this country are not educated, and because of that, they tend to draw the girls closer to them. Girls often look up to their mothers. The fathers, on the other hand, do not care about the things that go on around them

at home. All the father does is to provide money for the children's upkeep without necessarily being invested in the wellbeing of the children.

According to this male respondent, lack of maternal education influences the family dynamics and gender roles, which are likely to be more rigid in families where mothers have lower levels of formal education. Amina, a teacher, noted that the absence of an educated mother at home as a role model affects girls' aspirations and their desire to further their education beyond the primary level:

One of the girls told me, "Madam, in my home, even if I pass my final exam, they will not support me to attend secondary school." For such a child, you need to work on her psychology. We need more civic education in Ghana.

This comment suggests that teachers can perhaps counter some of the attitudes about education that come from the home, making the role of teachers critical to the improvement of girls' education in Ghana.

Teenage pregnancy was the most constant factor mentioned by the participating groups (policy officers, parents, and educators) as a deterrent to girls' educational attainment. Participants indicated that when girls become pregnant, they cannot continue schooling because they must care for the baby. Kosi, the math teacher, made this comment:

Girls have a disadvantage because a boy can impregnate a girl and continue his education, but a girl must drop-out if she is pregnant in order to attend to her baby. That is one of the causes of lower completion rate for girls in school.

Although there are Early Childhood Education centers, the cost of daily transportation may be a hindrance for teenage mothers as the beneficiaries of public education in Ghana are low-income families. Considering these biological differences that disadvantage girls, policy officers stated

they encourage pregnant students to remain in school. However, they maintained that the cultural climate and gender socialization of girls in Ghana do not support girls to continue schooling after giving birth. With the cultural notion of motherhood as a natural role (Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008), few girls return to school after giving birth. A Girls Education Officer, Baaba, elaborated on this point:

In the central region, they are proud of the number of children you have. It is not that these girls are married, they get pregnant just because of their community value the practice of having a lot of children. Most of the girls do not have enough knowledge about their reproductive health [...] Once they get pregnant, they feel shy about going back to school. For those willing to return to school after childbirth, the parents of the girl are not willing to take care of their grandchild to enable their daughter continue her education.

In her response, the Girls Education Officer also emphasized the significance of regional differences in girls' education, which, as addressed in the theoretical section (Figure 3.2, p. 55), signifies that spatial differences are critical in shaping girls' experiences. Consequently, the homogeneity of strategies and approaches for the universal basic education articulated in the global Millennium Development Goals and national frameworks have often overlooked intragroup heterogeneity. A Basic School Coordinator, Afia, emphasized this point in her interview:

Teenage pregnancy is still a challenge, but I think it has reduced, especially in the coastal areas [...] In that area when a female gives birth there a big outdooing, where the new mother receives many gifts from members of the community. So, many of the girls fancy this practice. When girls reach

adolescence, they are drawn towards having children so that they can be celebrated during their baby's outdoor ceremony.

It is essential to draw attention to regional differences in indigenous cultural practices in order to highlight how communities shape girls' life experiences. In countries like Ghana, where communities or ethnic groups are bound by cultural norms and beliefs (Kutsoati & Morck, 2014; Siegel, 1996), the collective attitude towards childbirth strongly indicates how girls define and perform gender (womanhood). Although basic education is free, girls might prefer to discontinue their education and have children at an early age because of societal values.

Other factors discussed by the participants were sexual harassment and abuse. These issues were presented from two perspectives. The first is the dominant discourse that some male teachers are responsible for sexual harassment and abuse of girls in school; the second discourse is that most harassment goes on in the home. Amina, an educator, presented her views on the first perspective in her response to the issue of pregnancy:

You hear in the news about male teachers harassing the girls. At junior high school and senior high school, the girls develop early, and they look beautiful. Some of these irresponsible male teachers take advantage of them. Sometimes male teachers are responsible for the pregnant cases that lead to girls dropping out of school. Some of these girls might not enroll in other schools to complete basic education because they fear there will be repeated experience.

Kofi, another educator, handled a sexual harassment case without involving law enforcement and spoke about how he dealt with the issue:

In my former school, there was this very serviceable girl. Most often, she runs errands for teachers. There was a situation; the girl reported to me she was

sexually harassed by a teacher because I provided Guidance and Counselling services for the school. I had to sit the girl down and talked with her. I never exposed the teacher that harassed the female student. I called the teacher, and I advised him to stay away from the female student that reported the harassment.

These are serious and disturbing allegations, indicating not only that male teachers harass girls but also that they may be responsible for some of the pregnancies. This information by the educator confirms arguments that sexual harassment by male teachers and students in educational institutions are under-reported (Atta, 2015). The experiences of sexual harassment by girls restricts school attendance and consequently retention (Porter et al., 2011; Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008).

Although the dominant discourse is that some male teachers are responsible for sexual harassment in school, some of the respondents linked girls' experiences of sexual harassment with male members of the household and community. This finding is related to the circumstances of many of the female students in the school where the interviews were conducted: most were living with other families as domestic servants. Consequently, their low social status makes them vulnerable, and, in most cases, they are reportedly taken advantage of by male members of the house or the community. Baaba, a Girls Education Officer, had a few instances to share about sexual harassment and abuse:

A 7-year-old girl went to the police to report when she was sexually defiled by a man in her community [...] There is a case I am handling now, that is why I told you I would be going to court. A girl has been going through sexual abuse for some years, but because of this girl-focused education, interaction, and counselling, she came out to report the abuse. We also have another case where

a girl was sexually abused by the son of the woman she is living with, and we are handling it.

Both policy officers and educators discussed harassment by male members of a girl's household. Jane, a Girl-Child Facilitator for the school in which most of the interviews were conducted, related this incident: "A girl had challenges with her guardian, and the case is in the court. I informed the Ghana Education Service in the metropolis, and the officer in charge took over the case. It is a case of defilement." Esi, the Ghana Education Service officer for Early Childhood Education in the district, spoke about the gender differences regarding sexual harassment:

You hardly see a boy that is given out by his parents as domestic help.

Sometimes these girls defiled and raped by the husband in the house where they serve. As a result, their education is interrupted. So, you always see girls struggling and boys excelling.

Based on the above comments on sexual harassment, working as a domestic servant predisposes many girls to sexual abuse. The assistant headmistress of the school, Gina, confirmed the correlation between working as a domestic servant and sexual abuse:

Some of the families the girls are living with often harass them. The male members of the household, that is, the husband of the women they are living with sexually harass these girls. We have faced a lot of them in this school. For those who are bold enough to come out and report sexual abuse, we deal with about 2-3 cases during the school year. Most girls are silent because they were warned that if they should tell anyone they would be harmed. So, they are afraid to share their experiences with these kinds of abuses.



These responses on sexual harassment and abuse by male members of households shed light on the consequences for girls engaged as domestic servants. Many of them confront sexual abuse by a male member of the house where they serve. The issue continues to receive little attention in the literature, even though in Ghana, most girls enrolled in public schools in the cities work as domestic servants.

The burden of house chores and caring for younger siblings is connected to the indigenous cultural expectations of gender (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). It is believed that a girl must learn how to take care of the domestic front and learn to provide care for her younger ones because someday she will be married and must perform these duties. A Girls Education Officer, Baaba, spoke about these implications:

Girls are made to babysit their younger siblings and lose out on being at school. Another factor is due to the perception that a girl must learn to cook, sweep and manage the domestic front, so, more house chores are assigned to girls. As a result, boys have free time to learn.

The cultural expectations of womanhood, which include cooking and caring for family members, are barriers to girls' education. This observation was emphasized by Esi, an Early Childhood Education Coordinator:

In Ghana, certain chores are for girls. In most of our homes, you see girls sweeping, washing plates, cooking and caring for the younger ones. On the other hand, boys are given the space to learn or watch television, for instance, educative programmes. Girls are pushed into the kitchen. Women in Ghana are branded with kitchen duties, so if you cannot cook, you are not an ideal woman.

Thus, as iterated by the participants, the education of girls suffers because of the burden of domestic chores and the provision of care for younger siblings.

Although Early Childhood Education centres are meant to provide care for children to relieve girls of the task (Adamu-Issah et al., 2007), an Early Childhood Education Coordinator, Esi, noted that the facilities are under-resourced and that instructors at the centers are not doing much to train the children:

My problem with the process is that when the government was setting up kindergarten schools, they failed to consider some factors. Before you set up kindergarten facilities, there should be ample space for the children with enough ventilation and learning centers. However, the government just erected buildings without proper resources. When you visit our Early Childhood Education centres, there are no playgrounds, which are very important for children at the level.

Because the resources are so poor in the Early Childhood Education centres, some parents do not see the need to cover the transportation cost to send their children there. Families with a limited income prefer to have their daughters care for the younger siblings. Although the expected outcome of the Early Childhood Education scheme is to improve learning outcomes for children and to allow older siblings, especially girls, to go to school instead of providing care for the younger siblings (Adamu-Issah et al., 2007), the government's failure to make adequate resources available to the centres is affecting the girls' school retention and completion rates.

The issue of social media and the related lack of self-control by girls as reported by the participants are new insights, especially considering the widespread use of the internet within the last decade. When parents were asked about any gender-related issues discussed during the

Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, one drew attention to the internet. Thomas, a parent, working as a teacher in a different public school within the metropolis, described the advice he gives to the parents of his students: “Due to the use of the internet in a modern day, teachers have been advising parents on the children’s use of the internet by emphasizing the need to encourage children to read their books, especially the girls.” Also, the influence of foreign cultures through our television programming is a big issue.”

Most parents and educators stated that because girls are vulnerable to the enticements of social media, they lose focus on their education. Foli, a concerned parent, shared his experiences at PTA meetings:

When we come to PTA meetings, there have been issues raised about the ways the girls dress. With the increasing rates of boutiques, girls are enticed by the appearance of the clothes on the mannequin. So, most will buy these clothes in the name of being fashionable. This mindset is destroying the lives of many of the girls. One of the girls had on lipstick. When she saw the parent approaching, she wiped off the lipstick from her lips. This is one of the traits that worry me. I am a man, so I am always concerned about how girls dress and present themselves [...] Girls are like cotton; the wind blows them anywhere.

Although the impact of social media and the infiltration of foreign culture in West Africa has received little attention in the literature, the participants believe these sources are shaping the mentality of girls, leading to morally questionable behaviour. Recognition of the impact of social media is one of the contributions of the study. However, the school where the interviews took place is in a metropolitan area in Ghana’s capital, where social media is prevalent. Social media

may have a stronger influence on girls in urban regions than on those in rural and remote communities, where there is little or no access to the internet and where stakeholders might have different views on the role of the media and foreign culture on girls' education.

Regarding cultural barriers, the significant sources of gender inequity in education, as noted by the participants, are as follows: son-preference, gender socialization, early marriage, traditional practices, and religion. Son-preference is informed by the notion that male children continue the family name and will become breadwinners, so the education of boys is given a higher priority than that of girls. During the focus group discussions, most parents suggested that the Ghanaian culture puts males first. Danso provided a detailed response to the issue of son-preference:

The opportunity is available for both boys and girls to go to school, but our culture is where the problem emanates. When parents have many children and cannot afford to pay school fees for all, they prefer to send the boys to school because the girls will eventually get married. So, when the girls are taken to school, it is not a good investment as they would end up getting pregnant or remaining in the kitchen of their husband. The boys are, however, the ones that provide for the home and feed the whole family. The reason why I use culture is that when there is a family problem, and you are the best woman in the family, your parents would call on the male children even if they are younger. Even when the woman is wealthy and can serve the family, they prefer to call on the male children first. Therefore, in our culture, men are first in everything we do. To educate ones' children, the boys are considered first before girls. That is why I mentioned both have the opportunity, but parents have a priority.

The cultural notions of the sexual division of roles and labour whereby women's role is mainly to raise children and take care of the home and men responsible for working in the public sector and providing for the family are critical to understanding parental choices (Atta, 2015; Tanye, 2008).

On the issue of son-preference, officers at the Ghana Education Service shared similar sentiments. An Officer for Girls' Education, Baaba, made the following assertion:

For us Africans, we have the perception that a woman's place is in the kitchen. Even if a woman goes to school to attain the highest level of education, a man will marry her. So, girls are mostly kept at home to be the manager of the children. Even at the primary level of education when boys and girls are given the opportunity to attend, the girls do not complete their programmes.

The Guidance and Counselling Officer in the metropolis connected son-preference to the cultural expectation of womanhood, which includes marriage in the Ghanaian context. Maame narrated a case where a girl got married while enrolled in school:

In Africa, we have son-preference. We have this phenomenon in Asia as well. So, when people give birth to girls, they tend to allow the girls to complete class six after which they can be married. Most families think educating a girl to the higher levels means wasting resources because at the end of the day they will be someone's wife. Most of the time you see the parents choosing to educate their sons. I had a case like that in one of the schools. The girl was 17 years old, intelligent and in Junior High School (JHS 2) and being given out for marriage. So, we had to intervene. The girl is currently in Senior High

School (SHS 1), and her goal is to become a lawyer, so she can defend other girls that are exposed to what she experienced. The mother of the girl in question told her “why are you interested in learning? Very soon we are giving you to an elderly man in Kumasi.” The girl was going to be the third wife to her supposed husband-to-be. Son-preference is an issue in Ghana.

Son-preference is a significant part of the Ghanaian culture. Even families with only female children feel their lineage will die off, so most try to find ways to have male children (Tanye, 2008; Takyi & Gyimah, 2007). The value placed on males leads to discrimination against girls. Maame, a Guidance and Counselling Co-ordinator for the Ghana Education Service, related some interesting practices that reflects the significance of son-preference in Ghana:

In some parts of northern Ghana, among the ethnic group called Frafra, do you know that when a family gives birth to 3 girls, the third daughter is not allowed to marry. The reason is that the group is patrilineal, so if all three daughters are married, then the family loses out on extending their lineage. As a result, the third daughter is made to have multiple children, specifically sons for the family so that the family lineage will continue. The man that impregnate the third daughter does not have rights over the child or children because they are not married.

The cultural preference for sons intertwines with the socialization process whereby girls are led to believe that their main role in life is to get married and become the responsibility of their husband (Tanye, 2008; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). This mindset does not inspire the girls to make education a priority. The policy officers and educators indicated that this cultural socialization influences girls in setting low educational standards for themselves because

marriage is more important than education or a career, given the cultural expectations attached to womanhood. Esi, an Early Childhood Education Coordinator, put it this way:

For the African child or the Ghanaian child, the challenge is the gender roles assigned by culture. This leads to an inferiority complex on the part of girls as they believe they must be experts in the domestic sphere and not strive for academic success.

A mathematics teacher, Kosi, noted the influence of culture and socialization on girls' education:

Girls seem to lack confidence in school. Some girls think they will end up marrying and their husband will take care of them, so they do not focus on school. But the boys know they are the breadwinners, so they hardly drop out.

Because men are socialized to be the breadwinners of the family, most girls focus more on being experts in the domestic sphere. Atta, a science teacher, linked this focus on domesticity with feelings of inferiority: "One of the challenges most girls face in school is inferiority. The kitchen is ours, the domestic sphere is ours, so, why do we bother ourselves with education?"

All these comments indicate how deeply gender roles are embedded in Ghanaian culture.

Geographical location shapes son-preference, gender socialization, early marriage, traditional cultural practices, and religion. These factors do not manifest in similar ways in all regions in Ghana. Depending on geographical location and ethnicity, girls in Ghana do not all have the same experiences and expectations. As noted by an official for Early Childhood Education and a Basic School Coordinator, ethnic groups or communities in the coastal areas

tend to celebrate early marriage and childbirth. Esi, an Early Childhood Education Coordinator, had some experience of people who make their living through fishing: “At times when we go to PTA meetings, we educate the parents, especially the fisher folks. For them, education is nothing, especially for girls because after a girl is educated, she ends up in the kitchen.” Afia, a Basic School Coordinator, emphasized the influence of geographical location as an indicator in girls’ educational attainment:

As I said earlier with the coastal areas, when a lady gives birth, during the child’s naming ceremony, they are showered with a lot of gifts. In this case, mothers will want their daughters to give birth so that they can enjoy such privileges linked to the culture of those in that community.

Early marriage is celebrated through various cultural practices by different ethnic groups in Ghana. Although Tuwor and Sossou (2008) and Tanye (2008) discuss early marriage as barriers to girls’ education in West Africa, the participants in this study provided detailed examples of cultural practices that celebrate puberty, early marriage, and childbirth in Ghana. The Gas’, an ethnic group that dominates the coastal areas in parts of southern Ghana, celebrate what is called the *Kpojiemor*. The cultural practice involves gift-giving to new mothers for going through the birthing process. The practice was reiterated by Baaba, a Girls Education Officer when she was sharing her views on cultural factors that influence pregnancy and low educational completion rates among girls:

For the Ga ethnic group, they have a rite they call *Kpojiemor*. The people revere this practice because it is performed when you give birth, and there is the baby naming ceremony. Girls aspire to give birth because they glorify the



tradition for the value placed on it by those belonging to that ethnic group.

Because they look forward to undergoing the traditional rite connected with childbirth, girls are wrongly influenced to undertake early pregnancy.

In addition to gift giving, there are other practices such as *Dipo* and *Bragoro*, which are rites of passage that mark adolescence and womanhood for girls. Girls that undergo these traditional customs are considered ready for marriage. Baaba went further to address other cultural practices that affect girls schooling:

In the eastern region, we have the Krobo's who give out their daughters hand in marriage at an early age after *Dipo*. The *Dipo* is now done much later when the girl is a young adult. Previously, the *Dipo* practice was done during the adolescent years, which meant that the girls that undergo the practice are considered ripe for marriage [...] Among the Akan's, especially some years back, after the *Bragoro*, girls were deemed to be ready for marriage. The puberty rite is performed after a girl gets her first menstruation. After the first menstruation, girls are seen to be matured for marriage. So, universal basic education is not achieved because of some of these cultural practices.

Although the *Kpojiemor*, *Dipo*, and *Bragoro* rites manifest the function of celebrating essential milestones for females, some of the unintended outcomes are girls leaning towards marriage and childbirth with less value for educational attainment. Other cultural traditions like being betrothed to a male suitor at an early age have had negative impacts on girls' education. A Girls Education Officer, Baaba, shared more details on cultural barriers to girls' education:

Some of our cultural practices and ethnic groups believe in betrothal. In cases of betrothal, the girl-child is given out at an early age to be supported by her

betrothed husband. Sometimes by the time the girl is 12 years, the betrothed husband will inform the family about coming for his bride. Once the girl is married, there is no way she would be allowed to go back to school.

Due to the work of several Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSO), there is some public disapproval towards cultural practices like the betrothal and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). FGM is a cultural practice that leads to early marriage among some ethnic groups in northern Ghana. The practice also serves as a social control because a woman's fidelity is considered vital to the survival of her marriage. Gina, an assistant headmistress, shared her views about FGM:

In the northern region, that is the Paga area, it was established in 1994 that Female Genital Mutilation should be cancelled. This practice should be abolished, but there are some clans or groups, that continue this practice secretly. They do it secretly, so they are still putting the girl-child through such pain. On 08 April 2014, there was an article about an occurrence in the Paga area, so it was reinstated that the Female Genital Mutilation must be abolished. I do not know how far things have been improved, but such practices affect girls' education.

Betrothal and FGM are perceived to have implications for human rights' of girls. However, the government, both past and present, has taken cultural relativist positions, suggesting that the practices must be understood from the perspective of the local custodians of the tradition (Ravelli & Webber, 2016; Tanye, 2008). The government's cultural relativist position is influenced by its desire to maintain the support it receives from specific ethnic groups during elections. The study participants expressed their concern about the tension between the

culture and the laws of Ghana. In Ghana and other African countries, there is mechanical solidarity among the collective, which leads to shared sentiments and a strong collective conscience (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). As a result, cultural norms are sometimes upheld in spite of the constitutional law. Afia, a Basic School Coordinator, explained the tension between culture and the law:

Currently, the Ministry of Gender holds parents accountable when they are reported as giving out their young daughters for marriage [...], But they only know about such issues when someone goes to report it. Most often, people do not report parents giving their daughters out for early marriage unless the person concerned is an advocate for girls. Otherwise, most cases are not reported. So, we must increase awareness in those communities.

As long as the culture restrains people from reporting on the illegal practices of their neighbours, change may be slow in terms of girls' education.

Most of the ethnic-cultural practices in Ghana have spiritual (traditional religious) implications. The practices serve more than a cultural purpose for the people. An example is the *Trokosi*. Kosi, an educator from the Volta region where the tradition is practiced, stated that, currently, only one village in the region observes *Trokosi* due to massive public awareness and disapproval:

The *Trokosi* system is still in practice, but it is not like in the past. I think in the whole Volta region, only one village (Klikor), that is currently upholding the tradition. These social problems will take some time to eradicate, although we are gradually improving [...] The *Trokosi* is a traditional religion. The goal is to curtail people from doing bad. With the *Trokosi*, if you steal someone's

property, and the person that lost the property goes to the shrine to seek revenge, members of the accused family will die continuously. When the accused goes for penance at the shrine for stealing, then human beings (virgin girls) are required as part of the sacrifice of atonement. So, the *Trokosi* is meant to deter deviant behaviour. Men are not used for the sacrifice because they do not believe it is man's place to be cooking, and cleaning. They want servants (meaning women) to be at the shrine.

The *Trokosi* practice has denied several girls in the Volta region the right to education (Tanye, 2008). *Trokosi* is meant to serve as a social control against crime. However, the duality of the traditional practice serving a cultural and religious function is an interesting insight.

Consequently, even though the *Trokosi* is gradually diminishing, the Civil Society Organizations, Non-governmental Organizations, and the government have a difficult task in eradicating the traditional ethnic practices that have severely discriminated against girls.

Foreign religions, like Christianity and Islam, have also contributed to the discrimination against women in Ghana (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Lambert et al., 2012; MacBeath, 2010). Formal education was introduced in Ghana through missionary work, which relied on the use of the Bible (MacBeath, 2010). However, contemporary Christian doctrines tend to promote the subordination of women because of the cultural notion that men are the head and decision makers (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010). A Girls Education Officer, Baaba, stated that during the Parent-Teacher Association meetings, the women hardly expressed their opinion:

We are brought up as women to be quiet and that the men must make all the decisions. In my former district, when there is a meeting, women are quiet

while the men lead the discussion [...] The men speak on behalf of the women.

If a woman talks and she gets home, there will be consequences.

Male dominance is reinforced through Christian doctrine, making women a subordinated group in Ghana, where religion plays a significant role. The Christian principle of the subordination of women and the patriarchal Ghanaian culture provide an alternative understanding of the standpoint and experiences of girls in Ghana. Maame, a Guidance and Counselling Officer, noted the influence of the church:

Some churches believe that a woman should not be allowed to speak in church.

It is believed that a woman should not pursue higher education because she might not get a husband, and so some churches practice beliefs that affect girls' education.

Furthermore, some churches in Ghana propagate the idea that Christians do not need formal education to become prosperous and successful. Jane, a Girl-Child Facilitator, made this observation:

Churches will quote from the bible telling their congregation that it is not education that leads to prosperity. There are rich people in Ghana, who did not go to school. Some started working at shops as apprentices, and now they are successful [...] Preachers use that example which discourages high educational pursuit. Such messages in church discourage the parents.

Thus, the belief is that God blesses regardless of one's knowledge.

Islam also presents challenges to girls' education. The Islamic religion permits a man to take more than one wife (Lambert et al., 2012). Several participants indicated that since the Ghanaian culture allows polygamy (more than one wife), girls in areas dominated by Islamic

religion marry early due to culture and religion. Afia, a Basic School Coordinator, shared some insights on religion and early marriage:

When you go to the northern parts, especially our brothers that are Muslims, for them, when the girl child is about 13 years, they can give her out for marriage. Most suitors' have cows and the girls' family will accept several cows for her bride price.

Although some cultural practices, like the bride price payment, present challenges to girls' education, an Early Childhood Education Coordinator, Esi, felt religion has a stronger impact than the indigenous culture in Ghana:

When I was in Kumasi, most of my neighbours were Muslims. At young ages like 12 or 13, these girls are given out for marriage. When the bride price is paid, they perform the customary rites known as *Amalia*. After the marriage rites, the girl is sent to her husband's home, often old men that are about 50 or 60 years.

Miriam, a Religious and Moral Education (RME) teacher, agreed with the Early Childhood Education Coordinator about the influence of religion on girls' education, indicating that most Muslim girls are married by the age of 18 "no matter where they have reached in their education," and adding, "if the parents are not formally educated, they tend to push girls into marriage."

Several of the participants claimed that especially in northern Ghana, early marriage and low educational attainment are linked. Extracts from the interviews indicated the importance of intersectional analysis in exploring the exclusion of girls' experiences from education policy in Ghana.

Beyond religion, the culture of patriarchy has shaped political spaces, participation, and inclusion. A Girls Education Officer participating in the study noted that the cultural notion that women are subordinate to men deter the few educated women from pursuing political positions, thus failing to improve representation and gender equity in participation. With only 36 women in parliament out of the 230 parliamentary seats (Bauer, 2017), the current state of male dominance in Ghanaian politics implies that male voices influence decisions about education policy and that the view of females, a valuable source of alternative knowledge, is ignored. Baaba, a Girls Education Official, talked about the male domination in political spaces:

Due to a lower number of females in the parliament, most of the decisions made are in favour of men. Men make decisions for women in Ghana without understanding the experiences of being a woman. Currently, we have less than 40 women in parliament. For Ghana, the way they do their politics, which is dominated by insults, and name-calling, I think women are afraid to join politics.

With the low representation and participation of women in political spaces in Ghana, achieving inclusivity in education policies will be difficult.

Based on the interviews and focus group discussions, it is evident that there are many socio-cultural barriers to education. The experiences of girls in Ghana emanate from the perception of gender and gender expectations. These societal perceptions and expectations are the underlying principles for issues like son-preference, early marriage, socialization, domestic chores, traditional cultural practices, and religion. In Ghana, culture manifests in religion and reinforces powerful cultural norms. The geographical location (rural or urban) and ethnic groups also define cultural expectations of gender, so groups in the coastal areas, especially the Ga

group, tend to promote childbirth because they attach a high value to the traditional act of gift giving to new mothers called the *Kpojiemor*. The respondents also spoke about other ethnic-cultural rites (*Dipo* and *Bragoro*) upheld by the Krobo and Akan ethnic groups, which celebrate puberty and usher girls into womanhood. These findings emphasize the intersections of gender and ethnicity in Ghana. Thus, making ethnicity a vital factor to consider in girls educational attainment in Ghana. The *Trokosi*, a religious practice among the ethnic groups in the Volta region of Ghana, again draws our attention to the overlap between religion, ethnicity, gender, and geographic location. These references confirm the arguments in Black Feminist Thought and intersectionality because a particular source of subordination (in this case, gender) may vary depending on its combination with other potential sources of subordination (religion, ethnicity, and geographical location).

### **6.3 Economic Challenges Affecting Girls' Education**

The economic challenges facing girls' education in Ghana emanate from two sources: the family level and the national level. With the family, the leading economic problem is parental poverty. Parental poverty has pushed several families to send their daughters away as domestic servants to other families in the cities for financial gain. Within Ghana's cultural context, it is common to see children assisting their parents in various trades such as selling goods in the marketplaces and on the farm, although the legal age for engaging in economic activities is 15 (Atta, 2015). Because Ghana's Labor Decree (1967) allows undefined 'light' work by children (as cited in Atta, 2015), engaging children in an economic activity to augment family income is a common practice. A common concern expressed by parents, educators and policy officers in this study is the high number of girls in public schools who work as domestic servants. All the participants held the view that most of the girls enrolled in public school in the metropolis are domestic



servants and that these positions have affected their education. Danso, one of the parents in the focus group, raised these points:

In this school, 60-70% of the children are not living with their biological parents. So how do such children get the help they need at home? Most of the children are engaged in some work for the families in this area. These guardians are more interested in the economic gains the children provide through labour work than investing in their education.

With guardians focused on economic gains and their own families, it is little wonder that the education of the children who work for them is not a priority. A Girls Education Officer, Baaba, shared the effects of these priorities on the girls in their care:

In the cities now, we have house-help issues. That is the major challenge for those of us in the cities. The girls who work as house-help send their guardian's children to school before they report to school. In some cases, the madam she is lives with will list several house chores that she must perform before leaving for school. We had a case of a girl living with a market-woman. Early in the morning, the girl must get to the shop earlier, set up the place and wait for her madam to show up at 9 am before receiving permission to go to school. Meanwhile, classes start at 7:30 am.

With many girls taking up domestic servant jobs in the cities, one of the male teachers, Atta, noted a higher enrollment rate for girls in the school:

What I have observed in this school is that most of the students here are living with people than their parents. When they bring them in from wherever they take these children from, they try to let them enrol in school. It happens that

more girls are enrolled in this school compared to boys because it is the girls that generally work as house helps.

The comments by Atta confirms the high enrollment of girls (154) compared to the number of boys (135) in the public school where most of the data were collected (personal communication, December 07, 2017).

Working as a domestic servant has several consequences for girls' education. As mentioned in the preceding discussion, girls are more vulnerable to sexual abuse by male members of the household, impregnated, and unable to complete basic education. Another effect of girls working as domestic a servant is the poor support they receive from their guardians. These girls lack basic needs, which forces some of them to engage in intimate relationships with men for financial gains. Thomas, a parent who works as a teacher in the metropolis, has observed the problems girls face in school:

As previously mentioned, girls living with other families as domestic help and who attend school often do not have decent school uniforms, shoes and socks to wear. Even some of these children come to school without eating. Some also walk long distances to school and walk back after school. Sometimes students approach us to say, "Sir, I am hungry." A girl in the school where I teach informed me her father had decided to let her stay with another family. The girl in question told me that the guardian she moved-in with could not provide all her needs. In the end, the girl befriended a boy that promised to give her money to sort out her needs. I was with the girl when the boy transferred 10 Cedis (Ghanaian currency) to her mobile phone account. I had to warn the girl to stay away from the boy and be content with what her guardian was giving

her. The result might be pregnancy, which would affect her education. This case happened three weeks ago.

Based on these quotations and the views of other participants, poverty or economic hardship experienced by girls draws them into intimate relationships with men for financial support. Gina, an assistant headmistress, blames the guardians for not upholding their responsibilities regarding the basic needs of the children under their care:

Some of these children are brought to live with guardians for a purpose. The purpose is to work as servants, so the focus is not to concentrate on the education of these children. Meanwhile, the parents of these children were deceived into believing that their children are in school, whereas they are working as servants for others. These children lack basic needs like a sanitary pad. The guardians do not care for the girls who they enrol in school. They do not follow up with the school to know how the children are doing.

Family poverty clearly has a negative impact on girls. Miriam spoke about the impact of poverty in children's educational opportunities:

Money plays a vital role as most parents are not capable of providing for their children. As a result, children of school going age are compelled to stay at home to assist parents in raising funds to support the family. The government had to intervene by introducing programmes to draw children to school. In this regard, the government came up with the school feeding, the provision of free school uniforms and some other education materials.

Although the government has framed basic education to be ‘free,’ families with scarce resources cannot afford to support their daughters. Girls are sacrificed to work as domestic servants with the promise of having their education funded, but guardians are not invested in providing the needs for the girls in their care to complete basic education. This finding raises questions about the values that influence the framing of education policy in Ghana. Although educators and policy officers claim that existing education policies are meant to expand access and reduce the parental burden, the desired outcome, to “provide girls with equal opportunities to access the full cycle of education,” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 8) continues to be an illusion.

The parents in the study suggested that the government’s failure to adequately fund education policies such as the Capitation Grant, free school uniforms, and free textbooks continues to make girls a vulnerable group, as schools must resort to levies to administer the daily operations. Danso, a concerned parent, put the challenges confronting girls in context:

We hear on the radio that there is free education, free books, free that.

Although the books and other resources promised by the government are not provided, it is always being said on the radio [...] I am saying that the background of the child coming to this school, either a house help, a maidservant or a distance relative plays a big role in the students’ performance. Since the guardian is not the biological parent to these children, they are not concerned about providing the school supplies that the government fails to make available despite the national policy. There are children in the school that struggle to buy books when their teachers make the request. What do you think will be the learning outcomes for such a child in this school? Most of the girls are maidservants in other people’s homes, that girl will suffer and will not

perform well unless she is self-motivated and takes school notes from her friends to study.

As this participant, makes clear, the children who are the beneficiaries of ‘free’ public education have a low socio-economic status. The government’s failure to make the necessary resources available has impacted the vulnerable girls working for others as domestic servants, whose guardians may not adequately support them. The lack of resources is evident in the untimely distribution of school grants, insufficient textbooks, and inadequate teaching and learning materials.

The Capitation Grant has enabled the government to abolish school fees: the government now provides a standard amount of USD 2.41 for each student per year for all public schools (Government of Ghana, 2017). However, as discussed above, the government consistently delay making the capitation grant available to public schools on a timely basis. Due to government’s failure to make resources available on a time, educators struggle to implement the “free basic education” policy by demanding school levies, which parents must pay for teachers to purchase learning materials for school lessons. Based on the response of the educators, when low-income families need to make a choice, the parental decision favours boys over girls. Specifically, with girls’ education, the government’s delay in providing the Capitation Grant and other interventions like the free school uniforms and textbooks results in challenges for girls’ education. Thomas, a parent, discussed the gender differences in needs with regards to poverty:

Girls have many needs. Boys are often not bothered with material needs, but girls have a unique experience where every month they need sanitary towels

for their menstrual cycle. When girls do not have the means to buy sanitary pads, then this challenge will draw them into destructive behaviours. Due to poverty, the parents may not be able to afford the basic needs required by girls.

For me, poverty is the strongest factor for the challenges girls face.

Other participants agreed with Thomas: poverty and inadequate resources are at the heart of the girls' low educational achievement in Ghana.

The Girl-Child Facilitator and the Policy Officer for Girls' Education indicated their struggle to generate the resources to support the work of the Girls Education Unit (GEU). The GEU, set up by the government in 1997 to address the challenges girls confront in schools, aimed to reduce the dropout rate (Ghana Education Service, 2002). The unit is, however, underfunded and the facilitators pointed out that the financial difficulty needs to be minimized if the target of gender equity in public education is to be achieved. A Girl-Child Facilitator, Jane, spoke about creating alternative ways to raise funds to support girls in school:

Regarding the case of girls that cannot feed themselves, the capitation grant has not been distributed, and we must find ways to accommodate vulnerable girls. We also make beaded jewelry for sale with the proceeds used for purchasing sanitary pads for the girls in the school. It is a district initiative. We also recycle used water sachets to raise funds to support girls regarding sanitary towels

The Girls' Education Officer at the Ghana Education Service in the district raised similar sentiments. She indicated that the constant lack of internal funding by the government and the reliance on foreign donors to support public education had been a major stumbling block to the operations and work of the GEU:

When the GEU was created, we had the Department for International Development (DFID) supporting girls' education, our activities which were a benchmark project. Since 2012, no funding has been allocated to support us so what do we do [...] Most of the time, we use our own resources because we want to see the work done. When you get a call that there is a problem either you have the resources or not, you must attend to the issue. If you are not passionate about the work, what do you do? If some small funds are given to the coordinators at the metro level to support the unit's activities, then our work will be better. Part of our job description is to visit schools for monitoring and measure the progress of the girls' but if we do not have the means, what do we do.

Kosi, a mathematics teacher, mentioned that when it comes to admission, most public Senior High Schools consider girls with a lower aggregate than boys in the Basic Education Certification Examination: "For instance, if a girl scores aggregate 10 in her finals and a boy had the same aggregate, in Ghana the girl will be selected first for secondary education."

However, with the lack of funds for the GEU and the inadequate resources for the Girl-Child Facilitators, retention for girls will be a challenge, although there are initiatives to promote gender equity in public education.

The economic challenge of inadequate funding and resources have implications for school infrastructure. Educators complained about the lack of science laboratories and Information Communication Technology (ICT) centres in the school. The government has a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programme for girls, yet the infrastructure to support the initiative is nonexistent in public schools. The deplorable school

infrastructure and limited resources affect students learning outcomes in regard to being on track to achieve universal basic education (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Canagarajah & Coulombe, 1997). Most parents and educators expressed dissatisfaction with the poor school infrastructure of public schools in the metropolis. Jane, an educator and a Girl-Child Facilitator, complained about poor school resources:

The government is encouraging girls to develop an interest in Math, Science and Information Technology. They should make resources available right from the onset and have teachers teaching these subjects at the nursery school level through to class six before students get to Junior High. ICTs require teaching not only when a student gets to a certain level of education. ICT should start right from scratch. Some of the private schools are using this approach, but public schools are not applying the early education approach for ICTs. The resources must be available as teaching cannot take place without access to computers and a lab. The schools should have laboratories for students to use. For instance, when we tell them blue litmus turns to white, they should be able to see how the process works in a lab, not in the classroom.

Sam, a parent, confirmed the absence of adequate school resources and its impact on student learning:

A laboratory experiment showing a chemical change provides a better way of learning. In Ghana, students are only given books to learn about these experiments. So, when it comes to the final exams, how do you think students will perform?



The poor school infrastructure extends to sanitation. The parents stated that the students lack access to proper sanitation and toilet facilities in public schools. Danso, a parent, mentioned that the school used as the research site has one toilet facility for both male and female students, as well as the teachers: “If you come down to the basic schools here, for a long time now we have only one toilet for over 300 students including teachers.”

The officer in charge of the School Health Education Programme indicated that the sanitary situation in public schools was deplorable, so there was a Condition Assessment Programme by the World Bank, which resulted in a Greater Accra Metropolitan Area project. The project involved building several washrooms for public schools and separate facilities for the community to prevent encroachment by community members. Ama, a coordinator for the School Health Education Programme, provided detailed information about the ongoing World Bank project for public schools in the district:

Looking at our recent studies on girls’ education, we had the challenge of suitable washrooms. During their menstruation, most girls end up absenting themselves from school. With the washrooms building project that is currently ongoing, we have changing rooms attached. For Tema, we have 36 washrooms under construction in our schools being funded by the World Bank. For retaining the girls in school, the new washrooms have change-rooms, so girls do not have to leave school or absent themselves due to poor school infrastructure during that time of the month.

Going by the responses of the School Health Officer, inadequate school infrastructure and washrooms for girls during their menstrual period is a significant hindrance to retention.

The World Bank funding of the new school washroom facilities in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area indicates the country's reliance on foreign aid and donor support to sustain the public-school system. This finding confirms arguments in literature that suggest most African governments, including Ghana, adhere to the conditionalities of global development programmes because of the semi-patronage relationship with international financial institutions and agencies that hold power to reward incumbent governments or withdraw support from non-compliant governments (Jones & Chant, 2009; Morley et al., 2009; Salih, 2005; Unterhalter & North, 2011).

The government's 2003-2015 Education Strategic Plan outlined "equitable access to education" as the first goal for basic education (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 8). The three strategies to achieve equitable access as per the 2003 Ministry of Education policy document are as follows:

- Promote and extend pre-school education,
- Increase access to and participation in education and training, and
- Provide girls with equal opportunities to access the full cycle of education.

Unfortunately, Ghana has struggled to achieve equal opportunity for girls to access the full cycle of education, as they still have lower completion rates (Tables 1.3 & 1.4, pp. 9-10). The current education policies and practices of girls' education do seem to have expanded access (enrolment) but have failed to boost girls' retention rates and achieve equity between girls' and boys' school completion rates. Ali, a parent, made the following observations:

The only way the policies are helping, in my opinion, is to bring more children to school, and that is it [...] My child brings only one book home and says, "this is what the free education gave to us." Only one exercise book for the

past two years [...] There is a big gap because the government is far from doing what the policy indicates.

Due to the over-reliance on foreign support and the lack of political will to generate internal funds for expanding school facilities and supplying resources, this study argues that economic challenges have denied most girls the equal opportunity to complete the full cycle of basic education. Economic challenges affecting girls' education include parental poverty and national economic problems, both of which present barriers to girls' retention and completion of basic education. With low-income families patronizing public education, socioeconomic status intersects with gender to deepen our understanding of the experiences of girls in the Tema area of Ghana.

#### **6.4 Political Interference in Public Education**

The theme of politics includes two major issues: the framing of policies and the policy formation process, and the politicization of education policies. The framing includes "how a policy problem is structured, and the resulting form and content of policy that illustrates how policymakers and the public construct meaning around a problem" (Hurlbert & Gupta, 2016, p. 342). In 1987, the first education policy for public schools put forward by the government was Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). The FCUBE was intended to expand access, improve equity, and boost quality (Sutherland-Addy, 2002; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). In 1992, FCUBE was made a constitutional mandate. In chapter six of the constitution, the section on the directive principles of state policy articulated some educational objectives relevant to the argument of policy framing (Government of Ghana, 1992). The educational objectives in Ghana's law were as follows:

- (1) The State shall provide educational facilities at all levels and in all the Regions of Ghana, and shall, to the greatest extent feasible, make those facilities available to all citizens.
- (2) The Government shall, within two years after Parliament first meets after the coming into force of this Constitution, draw up a programme for implementation within the following ten years, for the provision of free, compulsory and universal basic education (Government of Ghana, 1992, p. 38).

Based on Ghana's constitution, the education sector was to expand and promote equal access to all children. To achieve the expansion and promote equal opportunity, basic education needed to be 'free.' Subsequent governments initiated the current education policies: Early Childhood Education (2004), Capitation Grant (2005), the School Feeding Programme (popularly known as free feeding - 2005), and the Free Uniforms Programme (2009) to increase access and provide equal opportunity for all children (Ministry of Education, 2012). A review of the policies and the objectives of the 2003-2015 Education Strategic Plan indicates that the government's response to achieving equal access in education is based on the value of material provisions, which are framed as 'free' (Ministry of Education, 2003).

For most parents and educators, the framing of basic education as 'free' is misleading since parents must pay school levies (known as study fees) to assist educators in administering course lessons. The reason these levies are required is that the government has failed to disburse the needed funding to ensure free compulsory basic education. Consequently, policies like the Capitation Grant Scheme, the School Feeding Programme, and the Free Uniforms Programme have not been fully implemented to benefit students, even though Ghana's constitution demands

that education facilities be available in all public schools. Foli, a parent in the study, complained about the free education policy:

Basic education is not free, although the government has labelled it free. For me, I do not see any benefits when it comes to government policies. If I am not mistaken, teachers are relying on the study fees than concentrating on teaching. Parents pay study fees daily, but teachers are not doing what is expected of them. The school levy we pay is too much. We also contribute towards water and electricity bills in the school, which is not necessary.

Some parents perceive the school levy to be too high and unnecessary. Educators, on the other hand, feel the school levy is necessary because the government fails to disburse the Capitation Grant on time. Ali, a parent, pointed out the lack of teaching materials, desks, and funds to run the daily activities of the school:

Government officials go to some school, take 20 school uniforms along, share it for the students and then take pictures for news content. When you visit most of our public school classrooms, you will notice the teachers do not have chairs to sit on and tables for marking assignments.

In addition to insufficient numbers of school uniforms distributed as part of the government's Free Uniforms Programme, teachers do not have enough working desks in the classrooms. Thus, parents believe the poor working conditions of educators affect teaching and learning in public schools.

Although the constitution of Ghana stipulates the government is mandated to provide educational facilities at all levels and promote free, compulsory, and universal basic education, there are challenges as Ghana continues to struggle to achieve

universal basic education and gender equity. From the perspective of Akose, an English teacher and school secretary, politics have a significant impact on public education in Ghana:

I think politics have taken a central role in education. Politics must be separated from education, as these are two different spheres. Politics should not come close to education. If the government policy states, ‘free education’, yet resources and teaching materials are not made available to support the policy, then it is not free education. In such instances, teaching and learning become difficult. We lack resources and sometimes school material does not get to us in time.

The political inferences in education have resulted in severe challenges for teaching and support for student learning.

Although the lack of governmental funding is clearly a problem, the government of Ghana increased the Capitation Grant in the 2018 national budget statement. Ghana’s Ministry of Finance budget statement of December 2017 indicated a 100% increase of the Capitation Grant from GH¢4.50 per capita (USD 1.21) to GH¢9.00 (USD 2.41). Also, the budget statement revealed the absorption of 70% of the Basic Education Certificate Examination registration fees as subsidies for all registered candidates in both public and private schools (Government of Ghana, 2017). When asked about their views on the increase of the capitation and the implication for girls’ education, the research participants expressed a collective sentiment about the late disbursement of funds and the politicization of education. Kosi, an educator and a sports coordinator for the school where many of the interviews were conducted, expressed concerns about the late disbursement of the Capitation Grant:

You know things are expensive, and there is an increase in the cost of living, so the increase in the Capitation Grant is good and will help improve a lot of things. The problem is the time that resources are released. You know this is Africa, sometimes the supposed increase in school grants is meant to score political points as they broadcast in the news. However, when payments are slow or defaulted, no one gets to know. The delay in grant distribution causes pressure on the school as parents believe the government has released resources to school administrators, but we do not have the funds.

Akose, a school secretary, responded to the impact of politics on public education:

Well, it is on paper that the grant has been increased. However, the probability of the disbursement I do not know. When school reopens, and we as educators are starting with an empty pocket, only for school grants to get to our administration at the end of the academic term, then how do we use the grant. The government gives the academic calendar for the education sector, so they are aware when school starts. School grants and other resources must be ready before the start of the term. When this is not done, teaching and learning become difficult. Since education is free and we are not permitted to take school levies from students, how do we administer our duties without the Capitation Grant? The grant has been increased, but at the end of the day, it comes down to politics.

In addition to the collective sentiment of the late disbursement of school grants, teachers and policy officers at the Ghana Education Service expressed a feeling of alienation from the policy formation process. Most educators said the government sidelined them during the

education policy formation process. However, they expected to do a good job of implementing the policies, considering the challenges of late grant release, poor school infrastructure, and inadequate resources. Kosi, an educator who teaches mathematics, described the role of teachers in policy formation:

The government only call the leaders and not involve all teachers at the grassroots. They call the leaders, for example, the metro director of education to speak on behalf of teachers. They do one or two consultations but involving teachers on the ground is like 5% if I want to be frank.

Miriam, another educator, confirmed that education policy formation usually alienated teachers at the grassroots:

At times teachers are involved, but not at the grassroots level. What happens is that we have policy officials at the Ghana Education Service, so they involve them. However, the best practice is to come to the grassroots and involve the teachers in the classroom. The teacher in the classroom must be consulted because he or she knows what happens and understand the classroom dynamics better. If the government continues to consult those at the higher levels, then there is a disconnect because the policy officials are not in the classroom to know what happens. Most often policies are formulated without our input, yet the government expects us to implement it.

With a focus on the leadership of the teachers' association to represent the educators in policy formation, most of the educators in the study expressed a feeling of alienation although they are mandated to implement policies. Amina reiterated the role of educators as implementers of education policies:



We have the Ghana Education Service council that comes up with all these policies through the government. When these policies are made, then we are to implement. Teachers are asked to implement policies. [...] On all these education policy issues the government is always quick to blame teachers for the low performance and, yet they do not involve us in decisions that will benefit all. It is like the government wants to be the heroes of the day and if policies go wrong, then teachers take the fall,

Regardless of the alienation of teachers from the policy formation process, most felt that their evaluation reports to the Ghana Education Service were not addressed because they continue to work under unfavourable conditions. Although evaluation is a vital part of policy reforms, Kosi said educators hardly received any response from the Ghana Education Service regarding the evaluation reports:

We conducted the School Performance Appraisal Meeting (SPAM), which includes the submission of detailed reports. We provided detailed reports on policy implementation and a list of the resources we need to ensure effective implementation. We have been evaluating education policy, but, unfortunately, when you have a problem on the ground, and you write a report to the education office, there is usually no response. That is the challenge we face.

Kukua, the headmistress for the public that participated in the study, shared similar sentiments, saying there is hardly any response to the needs articulated by educators in the annual school reports:

We conducted an annual school census where we listed the things we need.

Formerly, this evaluation is done in November but now moved to February. At

times, the evaluation workshop takes place in my school. Our submissions go to Accra so that any NGO that wants to support can have a sense of what we need. Although we listed our needs, nothing has come out of the process. We have never received any support regarding the formal reports of our needs.

Policy officers raised similar concerns about their non-inclusion in the policy formation process. Going by the response of policy officers, the directors of the Ghana Education Service are the key players in the policy formation process. Their role as policy officers (programme coordinators) is to obtain training to assist teachers in the practice of policies. Maame, a basic school Guidance and Counselling officer, discussed her role as an implementer of policy but did not feel part of the formation process:

We are implementers, and as such, we just receive the policies drawn on paper, and they inform us of what we are expected to do. Then, we move to implementation by organizing workshops for teachers and put together seminars for students as well [...] We organize what is called the “in-service training” for teachers, coordinators in the schools and students. After we monitor the outcome of the training for each group.

The role of policy officers and educators as expressed by the participants in the education sector are as policy implementers, but both groups felt alienated from the policy formation process.

The alienation of educators and policy officers from policy formation provides new insights into the challenges with the current education policy initiatives and the goal to achieve universal basic education for everyone including girls. The educators observed that the politicization of education policies and the framing of basic public education as ‘free’ has led to

parental neglect and the shirking of responsibilities. Kukua, a headmistress, shared her views about the low parental support because of the ‘free education’ propagated by the government:

You know these policies are good. Now, most children are in school, but when the government used the term ‘free education’ some parents did not understand. As a result, parents bring their children to school, thinking everything will be provided by the government [...] I think these policies have improved enrolment, especially for girls, but parents need to be more supportive.

A Basic Design and Technology teacher, Amina, also noted the impact of the free education policy on parental support and responsibility:

These days, because of the free education promoted by politicians, most parents are now shirking their responsibilities. When school reopens parents are aware their children need notebooks, but none is provided. These parents do not give pens or any school supplies to their children [...] Because of this political thing, the government is doing by promoting free education; parents are shirking their responsibilities. The government must find a way to be truthful. They must be honest and state how they are substituting public education and let parents be informed about what they need to do to support government policy. When the government keeps promoting the idea of “free education,” then parents begin to feel they have no contributions to make.

When the government fails to make the resources available to fund the ‘free education’ initiative, then the goal of reducing the parental burden is not achieved. Consequently, parental decisions due to poverty are influenced by son-preference. Girls are given out as domestic

servants, so their guardians can support their education. As mentioned in the above discussion, poverty has a stronger impact on girls who resort to intimate relationships with older men to secure enough money to fund their education. The argument here is that the lack of political will on the part of the government to make resources available has strong implications for girls' schooling.

Parents do not feel they are shirking their responsibilities. The parents in the study argued that rather than focusing on the interests of ordinary citizens, the government uses education policies to score political points, win elections, and promote partisan politics. Sam, a parent, said:

In this county, we do not have a national policy; rather, we have partisan policies. Immediately one political party like the National Democratic Congress (NDC) is doing this good project and are voted out of power; their project gets abandoned.

The politics, according to Danso, another parent in the focus group, lead to the partisan implementation of policies as the strongholds of the political party in power receive all the support in their constituency:

When you hear about the free education policies, most often the politicians fulfill these obligations in their strongholds. They make sure they do their best there so that when it is time for elections they get the votes. When you go to other schools in the same constituency, you will see they lack although the parliamentarian claims he made certain provisions, which is always for their strongholds. Therefore, education policy must be free and fair.

The prevailing sentiment among parents is the high politicization of the education sector and the government's failure to make adequate resources available and use best practices for public schools. For instance, the current government used the slogan of 'free Senior High School' as part of its political campaign during the 2016 general elections, but after winning the election, the policy was put into practice (Abdul-Rahaman, Rahaman, Ming, Ahmed & Salma 2018). However, the government did not expand the existing infrastructure for Senior High Schools in Ghana before making the policy official. In December 2017, the first year of implementation of the free Senior High School policy, there was an influenza virus (swine flu) outbreak in the Kumasi Academy, a senior high school located in the Ashanti region of Ghana (Joy News, 2017). Forty-four students were rushed to the hospital, and four died (Joy News, 2017). Danso, an active parent in the PTA, cited the influenza virus outbreak in order to emphasize the highly political nature of social policies, including education:

In our Ghana education, we have a minister controlled by someone in a higher position, and then there is the educational head being controlled by someone else. So, if something goes wrong in your school, and you voice it out, you are sacked. This is where our problems are coming from in public schools. In instances where school toilet facilities get damaged, heads do not have a voice. They can only write to the education office to inform them, but no one cares or comes to solve the problem. No one comes to your rescue until there a disaster in the school before you see people talking about the initial problem. We have a disaster now in Kumasi, and that is making the news.

Other than the increased number of students in Senior High Schools in response to the policy, most schools are lacking infrastructure. Tiwa, a parent in the study, spoke about having to

mobilize other parents to contribute towards the building of the school bungalow, so teachers can be close to the campus to supervise the increasing number of students:

With the free Senior High School that the government introduced recently, there are challenges. Before the pressure was not as much, so the teachers that reside in the school are few. Now that we have high enrolment, more teachers need to be given on-campus accommodation so that they can supervise the children, but they have not done so although the free Senior High School policy is in motion. Two weeks ago, we went for a PTA meeting, and the parents had to make payments so that the school can complete the campus bungalow for the teachers. Some of the parents were not ready to pay because the government says it is ‘free education’. I had to plead with the parents to consider making the payment to complete the teachers’ bungalow because of the welfare of our children. There were only two teachers on the campus in charge of over 1000 students.

The parents raised a crucial point because, considering the completion rate in 2015 was 70.6% for females in contrast to 76.4% for males (Ministry of Education, 2016), Ghana has not achieved universal basic education and gender equity. The current government should have focused on educational reforms to ensure all children enrolled in basic school complete their education with support for the Girls Education Unit. Instead, the government has implemented a new ‘free Senior High School’ policy, ignoring the challenges at the basic level of resource availability, funding, school infrastructure, and incentives. Thus, partisan politics and the politicization of education policies remain a hindrance to achieving an inclusive basic education

beyond the set date of the Millennium Declaration, which shaped the policies that were highlighted in the study.

The analysis of political interferences in education reveals that politics intersect with economic challenges to stifle the opportunities for universal basic education and gender equity. As a result, education policies are political tools for winning votes and elections with no commitment to generating the resources to fund public education programmes. Because public schools are underfunded, educators rely on school levies to cover the cost of administering courses. In cases of financial hardship, parents decide to educate boys compared to girls because of the cultural norms, including son-preference. The intersections between politics, economic challenges, and the indigenous culture have helped to articulate the experiences of girls regarding basic educational attainment in the Tema area of Ghana.

## **6.5 Summary**

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research findings based on socio-cultural, economic, and political themes. The educators and policy officers in the study cited a number of socio-cultural barriers as accounting for low retention and completion rates of girls. Among them are son-preference, broken homes, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, sexual harassment, the influence of social media, and traditional cultural practices (*Trokosi*, *Bragoro*, *Dipo*, *Kpojiemor*, betrothal, and Female Genital Mutilation). All the participants (educators, policy officers, and parents) pointed to economic challenges that hinder the achievement of the goals of Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education and gender equity. These challenges included girls working as domestic servants, family poverty, late distribution of school grants, poor school infrastructure, limited facilities, and inadequate teaching and learning materials. Parents particularly cited political interference as the main reason for why girls lag behind boys in school

completion rates. According to the parents, the framing of education policies as ‘free,’ the politicization of policies to win elections, and the partisan politics that halt the continuity of existing policies influence their decision to make boys' education a priority, especially in low-income families that are the beneficiaries of public education.

The findings reveal a strong overlap between gender, ethnicity, geographical location, economic challenges (family and national level), and politics. These multiple, intersecting sources have provided a deeper understanding of the diverse experiences of girls in Ghana. Through Black Feminist Thought, which privileges intersectional analysis, the findings have generated an alternative knowledge relevant to education policy reforms in Ghana.



## **CHAPTER SEVEN: THE RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss and provide answers to the three research questions of the study in this thesis. I highlight how the thematic categories obtained from the data intersect and overlap in providing a deeper understanding of the context of the research topic. Additionally, I highlight the critical contributions of the study's findings, including the politicization of education, the impact of social media on girls' education, girls working as domestics servants in exchange for an education, the issue of domestic servants in general, and the alienation of educators and policy administrators from the policy formation process. Finally, I situate the findings within the intersectionality theoretical context that provide justifications for the adoption of Black Feminist Thought .

### **7.2 Answers to the Research Questions**

The first research question asks how current education policies and practices have influenced girls' enrolment and completion rates. In order to evaluate how the current education policies and practices have influenced girls' enrolment and completion rates, it was essential to seek the participants' opinions of the values that shape the government's education policy. From the perspective of a School Health Education Programme Coordinator, Ama, the core values rest on the need to expand access, reduce parental burden, and reduce poverty: "The motivation is to get all children into school, so giving free textbooks, uniforms, school feeding, and no tuition attracts children to school. Also, families with low income will have no incentive but to send their children to school."

The government's goal to eliminate the barriers to schooling influenced initiatives like free feeding, free school uniforms and free textbooks. Atta, an educator,

spoke about how the current educational programmes reduce financial burdens on parents:

The objectives are to lessen the burden on parents. Secondly, to supply the basic needs of children in school. The government first estimate the cost of the basic training, budget the cost and try to absorb it so parents will be willing to send their children to school. This is because most parents claim financial problems are the reasons they are not able to send their children to school. So, if the government is covering the cost of basic education, then what will cause parents to keep their children at home. You must bring your child to school.

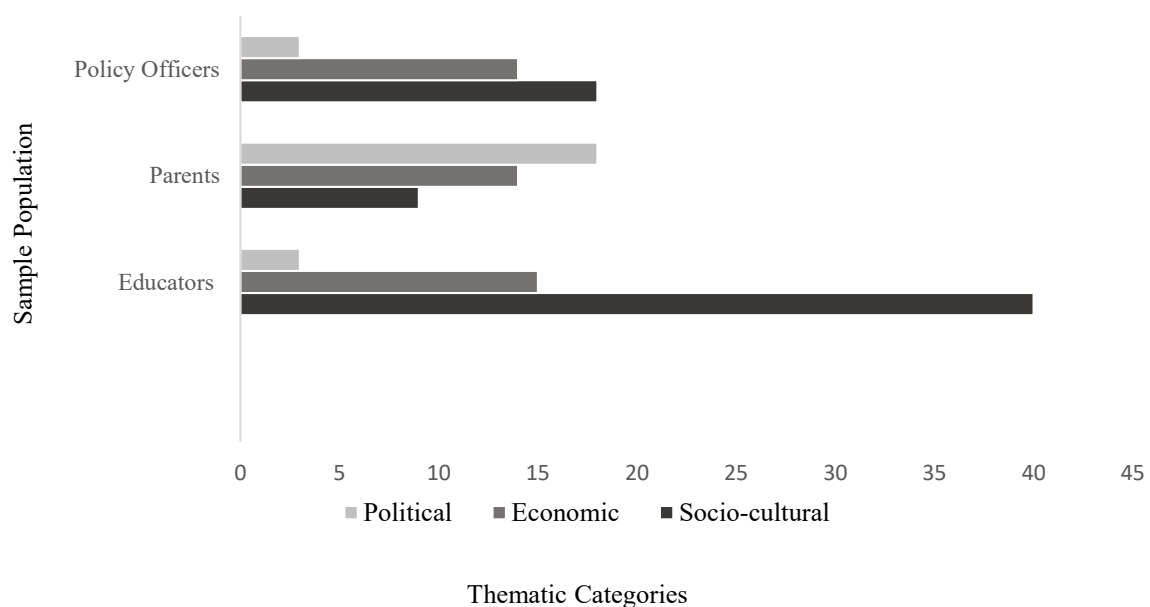
From the above responses, it appears that the intended impact of Ghana's current education policies is to reduce the financial burden on parents and make basic education accessible.

Although gender equity, retention, and completion are all part of the 2003 Education Strategic Plan designed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, Ghana failed to meet the set targets. Ghana has struggled to reach the goal of achieving equal opportunity for girls to access the full cycle of education, as seen in the lower completion of girls' rates compared to those of males (Tables 1.3 & 1.4, pp. 9-10). Current education policies and practices seem to have expanded access for girls (as seen in girls' higher enrolments in basic education); however, they have failed to improve girls' retention rates. As a result, gender equity in completion rates is still a challenge and not achieved. Ali, a parent, made this observation about the impact of education policies on girls' education: "The only way the policies are helping, in my opinion, is to bring more children to school, and that is it." Kukua, the headmistress for the school where most of the interviews were conducted, made a similar point but framed it a little more

positively: “I think education policies have improved enrolment, especially for girls, but parents need to provide more to their daughters.”

The impact of current education policies and practices on gender is an improvement in access, but retention and completion are challenges, especially for girls.

The second research question asks what perceptions and experiences of policy administrators, educators, and parents have regarding the gender inequity in basic education in Ghana. To answer this question, a comparison of the views of parents, educators, and policy officers about the impact of education policies on gender equity at the basic level was conducted (see Figure 7.1 below)



*Figure 7.1.* Responses of Participating Groups about the Socio-cultural, Economic and Political Factors that Contribute to Gender Inequity in Public Basic Education

The y-axis of Figure 7.1 is the sample population, which includes five policy officers, 10 parents and nine educators, all selected from the Tema Metropolitan Area of Ghana. The x-axis

represents the number of responses associated with the thematic categories: political, economic, and socio-cultural. For the parents that participated in the study, the reasons for understanding gender inequity in basic education lie within political influences like partisan politics, the discontinuation of education policies by successive governments, and the lack of political will to fund education programmes. In their view, due to political interference, girls from low-income families who are beneficiaries of the public school system tend to face discrimination due to cultural norms that promote son-preference. This makes political interference the major concern for parents. The least cited factors by parents are socio-cultural.

In contrast to the parents in the study, the educators and policy officers associate the lower educational attainment of girls with a range of socio-cultural and economic factors. They believe that changes in cultural attitudes will result in gender equity in educational attainment. Educators and policy officers emphasize the economic benefits (e.g., bride price payments) which parents obtain by giving their girls out for early marriage or as domestic servants. Hence, according to this group of participants, socio-cultural barriers and economic problems are the major factors as imparting gender equity in basic public schools in the Tema area. For this group, politics has a minimal impact on gender inequity in basic educational attainment. In comparing the perceptions of the participants (parents, educators, and policy officers), views on economic challenges were the least varied. However, all participants indicated that economic problems are critical issues that need addressing in order to achieve and promote gender equity in public schools at the basic level in the Tema Metropolitan Area of Ghana.

The final research question asked how education policies, programmes, and practices can be enhanced to improve school retention and completion rates of girls. The main changes needed to improve the current education policies cited by participants based on the analysis of data

include making education policies apolitical and altering the framing of public education as ‘free.’ Other factors identified include the need to improve school infrastructure and expand resources to ensure that teaching and learning materials are available. Involving educators and policy officers in the policy formation process would increase the sense of commitment. Beyond policy, study participants highlighted the need to engage other stakeholders (parents, religious leaders, traditional rulers, and students) in educational decision-making and to expand civic education to address socio-cultural factors that shape parental choice and traditional practices that discriminate against girls. Cited below are some of the ways to include stakeholders, according to the Kukua, a school headmistress:

There is a need for cultural sensitization. Just as politicians have time for election campaigns, we must create the space for cultural sensitization. Civic education must go down to the grassroots. During the celebration of festivals and church events, we must use these mediums to educate the public. Schools can also organize a civic education for the public. This must be done in collaboration with the community leaders. When we engage with stakeholders often on the issue of girls’ education, there will be changes.

Creating space for civic education about the cultural barriers to education must include community leaders at the grassroots level. Other ways to educate the public about cultural barriers to education were addressed by Amina, an educator:

We have the National Commission for Civic Education which the government can collaborate with and disseminate information. When the information goes to the grassroots, and the people understand, it is easier for us to see change. If

the government officials sit in their offices in Accra, there is no way the people can understand the value of girls' education.

According to the research participants, strong civic education involving stakeholders and the public is vital to advance the agenda for a change in cultural attitudes that discriminate against girls and women.

### **7.3 Intersectional Analysis of Socio-Cultural Barriers, Economic Problems, and Political Interference in Public Education in Ghana**

The thematic categories – socio-cultural barriers, economic challenges, and political interferences – have provided detailed insight into the impact of education policy on gender in Ghana. It is important to emphasize how these thematic categories retrieved from the data intersect and overlap in providing a deeper understanding of the context of the study. Socio-cultural barriers intersect with economic challenges and politics. For instance, the ethnic-cultural practices of early marriage and betrothal have economic implications as families benefit through the bride price payments. As practiced among some ethnic groups in parts of northern Ghana, the initial bride-price of seven cows is supplemented by three more when a daughter gives birth to three boys in succession (Tanye, 2008). Thus, the cultural practice of early marriage of girls and childbirth has economic benefits for families. Other ethnic-cultural customs, like *Dipo* and *Bragoro* (puberty rites that initiate girls into womanhood), indicate the gender expectations that women will highly value marriage and childbirth. The *Kpojiemor*, the practice of gift-giving to new mothers, has an economic value embedded in the practice. The insight provided by the data about girls working as domestic servants also intersected with economic gains: the girls are made to work as domestic servants for their extended families; if their pay is insufficient, they may seek financial income by other means from other sources instead of focusing on their education.

*Trokosi*, a practice in which a virgin daughter is given by her family to a traditional shrine to atone for the social violations of male members of her family, intersects with politics and the rule of law in Ghana. Although Ghana's Constitution states that "no person shall be held in slavery or servitude or be required to perform slave labour" (as cited in Tanye, 2008, p. 172), no member of the ruling government has attempted to abolish the *Trokosi* practice. Most politicians take a cultural relativist standpoint, implying that the maintenance of *Trokosi* essentially depends on the goals of the custodians of that culture irrespective of the human rights' implications (Tanye, 2008). However, as highlighted by the study participants, winning electoral votes often guides the actions of politicians in Ghana, so they tend to allow certain ethnic-cultural norms to persist. Thus, the indigenous culture in Ghana operates within its own laws and functions.

Economic problems overlap with politics to affect the government's capacity to adequately fund basic education policies to improve access and school completion for all children. After Ghana signed on to the Structural Adjustment Programme in the 1980s, the country's spending on public education declined by 20% between 1990 and 1994 (Akyeampong, 2009; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). The decline in spending increased charges for school uniforms, books, and levies for school building projects (Akyeampong, 2009; Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). Thus, global politics, including the Structural Adjustment Programme, have had negative consequences on the Ghanaian economy. Although the government of Ghana depends on donor support to fund basic education (Table 2.1, p. 29), politicians continue to entice the electorate with the idea of 'free education,' despite the inadequate school infrastructure with limited teaching and learning materials.

Furthermore, the government is consistently late in the release of school grants. Thus, public schools must charge school levies despite the free basic education policy. The late disbursement of school grants by the government has an influence on parental decisions about the education of their children. Because of the consistent late release of school grants, parents must incur some education costs, and thus low-income families chose to spend limited funds on the education of their sons rather than that of their daughters. In making this choice, there is no incentive for families to resist the cultural ideals of son-preference. Based on the above arguments, socio-cultural factors, economic problems, and political interferences overlap. Hence, Ghana still struggles to achieve gender equity in basic education despite the introduction of several policies introduced to promote universal basic education.

#### **7.4 The Contributions of the Study**

The contributions of the study include the role of traditional practices that celebrate marriage and childbirth over educational attainment, the problem of girls working as domestic servants in cities, the negative impact of social media on girls, alienation of educators and policy officers from the policy formation process, the framing of education programs as ‘free,’ and the politicization of education policies.

The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of the topic about the impact of education policies on gender in Ghana in part by highlighting the implications of ethnic-cultural traditions like the *Dipo*, *Bragoro*, and *Kpojiemor* on girls. The *Dipo* and *Bragoro* are puberty ceremonies that initiate girls into womanhood. The *Kpojiemor* is the celebration of new mothers through gift-giving. These ethnic-cultural traditions mark the different stages of life. However, an alternative function of the cultural practices is to socialize girls to value early marriage and childbirth over educational achievement.



This thesis draws attention to the issues of girls whose parents send to relatives to work as domestic servants in order to gain access to basic education in the cities where public education is assumed to be of better quality than in the rural areas. Consequently, girls are sometimes used for paid labour, are neglected and sexually abused by male members of the households where they reside. Another vital contribution is the role of social media, which enable the infiltration of foreign culture that influences girls, especially those in the cities and distracts them from focusing on their education.

Another contribution to the research topic is the alienation of educators and policy officers from the education policy formation. The implementation role assigned to educators and policy officers by the government leads to feelings of exclusion. Adding to their burden, educators lament that policymakers do not consider the evaluation and needs report that they submitted annually. Thus, this study found high dissatisfaction between educators and policy officers regarding working conditions, infrastructure, and resources for schools.

The thesis highlights the importance of understanding the differences between the ways in which education policies are framed and how they operate. The term ‘free education’ is perceived as misleading as educators must rely on school levies to administer lessons due to the consistent late distribution of school grants. The framing of education policies is problematic, and the goal of reducing parental burden is unmet with low-income families resorting to favouring the education of boys compared to girls.

Finally, the role of politics in public education is another crucial factor. The lack of political will to fund existing education policies and partisan politics create barriers to attaining universal basic education and gender equity. The depoliticization of education policies and

practices is necessary in any national focus on equitable access, and retention, in order to provide girls' equal opportunities to complete the full cycle of basic education.

### **7.5 Situating the Research Findings within the Black Feminist Framework**

The theoretical framework for the study, Black Feminist Thought (BFT), is useful in providing better understanding of the exclusion of the experiences of girls from the realm of policy. Black Feminist Thought adopts an intersectional approach to articulating the oppression of black women (Collins, 1989). Black Feminist Thought claims that the consciousness (experiences) of race, gender and social class shapes black women's standpoint (Collins, 1989). While Ghanaian girls' experiences related to race and gender are significantly based on the country's colonial history of formal education, the intersectional approach within BFT provides the opportunity to broaden the sources of oppression to include ethnic culture (traditions of the various ethnic groups in Ghana). As a result, BFT fits well with the research topic about the impact of education policies on gender because, beyond race and gender, the findings reveal that many factors intersect to define the oppression or relative privilege of girls in Ghana. These factors include indigenous cultural practices based on ethnicity, geographical location (rural or urban), lineage systems (patrilineal or matrilineal), family structure (monogamous or polygamous) and religion (Christian, Islam or Traditional deity worship). For instance, an Islamic girl born into a polygamous family with patrilineal kinship ties in the northern rural region of Ghana has different life experiences and opportunities than a girl from a monogamous Christian family residing in an urban area like Accra, Ghana's capital located in the south.

Black Feminist Thought further posits that to understand the consciousness of race and gender, we must consider the Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation and cultural epistemologies unique to black women (Collins, 1989). Western influences, like Christianity and

Eurocentric programmes like the Millennium Development Goals, Structural Adjustment, and Education for the Knowledge Economy, reflect the goals of the institutions from where they originate, like the Church, United Nations, the World Bank, and other global funding agencies. Thus, these institutions tend to promote cultural hegemony based on Western ideals of gender inclusion and development. As highlighted in the study findings, the World Bank is currently funding washrooms to support girls' education in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area in Ghana. Additionally, a Girls Education Unit established based on recommendations of the World Bank, and the UNICEF to address the gender gap in school enrolment between 1987 and 1995 (Table 1.1, p. 5), demonstrates how subordinate groups, like girls and women in Ghana, lack the motivation for political activism. Moreover, they have no valid independent interpretation of their own oppression (Collins, 1989). The role of Christianity, initially a Western concept, continues to define and shape girls' experiences in school because core subjects like Religious and Moral Education (RME) and Christian Religious Studies, which are part of the curriculum at the basic and secondary levels in Ghana promote the biblical notions of gender. As advanced by BFT, black women's experiences are partly constructed and articulated through the lens of the Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation.

The second source that defines the black woman's experience is cultural epistemologies unique to black women. From the study data, indigenous practices like *Trokosi*, *Dipo*, *Bragoro*, and *Kpojiemor* refer to ethnic-cultural epistemologies unique to girls and women in Ghana. The cultural traditions are performed, depending on the ethnic group, region (geographical location), and religion (Traditional, Christianity or Islam). Practiced by some ethnic groups in the Volta region of Ghana, *Trokosi* is not just a traditional custom but has spiritual and religious significance. *Bragoro* is a tradition of the Akan group in the Ashanti region. The *Dipo* has the

same cultural function as the *Bragoro*, a practice of the Krobo ethnic group in Eastern Ghana. The Ga group upholds the *Kpojiemor* (the practice of gift-giving to new mothers) in the coastal area of the Greater Accra region. The references to these cultural practices by respondents enforce the connection among ethnicity, geographical location, and religion, confirming the arguments I propose based on *The Intersectionality of the African Feminist Standpoint* (Figure 3.2). The framework I propose suggests that the experiences of girls in Ghana, like those of other African women, are defined by European Knowledge (colonialism and globalization) and Indigenous Knowledge (traditional ethnic culture). The influence of Indigenous knowledge is based on ethnicity, geographical location, and sometimes the religion of the group. In this study, educators and policy officers linked early marriage, including betrothal, to ethnic groups in Northern Ghana that are predominantly Muslim.

The educators and policy officers referred to traditional practices, early marriage, and religion (Traditional, Christianity, and Islam) as barriers to girls' educational attainment. Depending on a girl's ethnicity, geographical location, religion, and family structure, she might have a lower or higher social, cultural, economic, or political status (Figure 3.2). Thus, the proposed alternative indigenized framework, *The Intersectionality of the African Feminist Standpoint* makes a credible and useful contribution to the topic. It promotes a theoretical approach that explores the perceptions of stakeholders (parents, educators, and policy officers) regarding girls' education and generates alternative knowledge useful for understanding the experiences of girls and ways Ghana can enforce inclusive reforms in basic education.

## **7.6 Summary**

This chapter has provided answers to the research questions. In terms of how the current education policies and practices have influenced girls' enrolment and completion rates, the

findings suggest that they have expanded access and enrolment but have failed to change inequitable school completion rates. When the perceptions and experiences of the participants are compared, parents believe that whereas socio-cultural factors have little impact on education, political barriers must be overcome to address gender inequity in basic education. In contrast, educators and policy officers associate the lower basic educational attainment of girls with a range of socio-cultural factors and believe that politics has minimal impact. All the participants cited economic problems as a contributor to gender inequity in basic public education, but for all groups, economic problems were a secondary factor.

The thematic categories derived from the data intersect and overlap because socio-cultural factors like early marriage, betrothal, and girls working as domestic servants provide a family with economic gains. Thus, socio-cultural and economic factors are intertwined. Additionally, ethnic-cultural practices like *Trokosi*, despite abusing human rights and breaking the country's laws receive the support of politicians whose intent is on winning the support of the electorate rather than using Ghana's Constitution to fight human right abuses. Finally, global politics and economic reform programmes have persuaded the government to reduce its social spending and instead rely on international donor support. Politicians use education policies to entice voters without generating enough internal funds to improve basic schools and make universal education a reality for all children in Ghana.

This study has contributed to understanding the impact of education policies on gender in Ghana by highlighting the following main observations:

- The politicization of education policies and the framing of education initiatives as 'free';
- The alienation of educators and policy officers from the policy formation process;
- The negative influence of foreign culture through exposure to the internet;

- Parents sending their daughters to cities to work as domestic servants, so they presumably can attain basic education, when the reality is very different; and
- Traditional practices that celebrate marriage and childbirth but not educational attainment.

When the findings are situated within the theoretical framework of BFT, socio-cultural barriers, economic challenges, and political interference intersect with gender to influence the life experiences of Ghanaian girls and women. The perceptions of educators, policy officers, and parents have combined to provide an in-depth understanding of the impact of the current education policies on gender and have paved the way for the adoption of more inclusive reforms.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary of the research and important arguments raised in the study.

The chapter also discusses the reflections and insights about the methodology. It concludes with policy recommendations as well as thematic areas for future research

### **8.2 Research Summary**

This study has focused on the gender impact of Ghana's education policies inspired by the Millennium Development Goals, and the Education for All articulated at the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 (Atta, 2015; Rolleston, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2010). The study also examined the effectiveness of Ghanaian government's recent policy goals aimed at increasing access to and equal participation of girls in education by providing them with the opportunity to complete a full cycle education. These policies based on the Ghana Ministry of Education's (2012) Report on Early Childhood Education (2004), the Capitation Grant (2005), the School Feeding Programme (2005), and the Free Uniforms Initiative (2009). Ghana missed the United Nations' target of achieving universal basic education and gender equity by 2005. Based on reports by Ghana's Ministry of Education (2010), girls completion rate was 74.70% compared to 81.20% for boys in the 2005/2006 school year. Consequently, the Ghanaian government slightly revised the Education Strategic Plan to still emphasize access, equity, and quality in education in 2010 (Ministry of Education Report, 2013). With 2015 being the final year for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, school completion rates in 2015 were 70.6% for females and 76.4% for males (Ministry of Education Report, 2010). Despite introducing and even strengthening policies to reform education, Ghana did not achieve

universal basic education and gender equity by the 2015 date based on the Millennium Declaration set by the United Nations in 2000.

The main research objective has been to explain the failure of the Ghanaian government's education policies and practices in achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of gender equity in basic education. To this end, the study asked the following questions:

1. How have the current education policies and practices influenced girls' enrolment and completion rates?
2. What are the perceptions and experiences of policy administrators, educators, and parents regarding gender inequity in basic education in Ghana?
3. What do these perceptions and experiences reveal about how education policies, programmes, and practices can be enhanced so that school retention and completion rates of girls improve?

To provide data to help address the research questions, the study used qualitative methods. These included in-depth interviews and focus group discussions on generating findings. Three participating groups took part in the data collection process: parents of children enrolled in public school, educators, and policy officers in the district office of the Ghana Education Service. All the participants in the study were recruited from the Tema Metropolitan Area of Ghana. Interviews and focus group discussions were used because the theoretical approach for the study, Black Feminist Thought emphasizes that the unique experiences (standpoints) of individuals and groups produce alternative knowledge for understanding the intersecting sources of oppression.

The research results were coded into three thematic categories: socio-cultural barriers, economic challenges, and political interference. Socio-cultural barriers to achieving gender



equity at the basic educational level are son-preference, the burden of domestic chores, teenage pregnancy, early marriage, sexual harassment, foreign influence through social media, broken homes, and traditional cultural practices (*Trokosi*, *Dipo*, *Bragoro*, *Kpojiemor*, betrothal, and Female Genital Mutilation). Economic challenges include family poverty, girls working as domestic servants to augment family income, poor school infrastructure, the lack of teaching and learning materials, and inadequate school facilities. Finally, political interference that hinders universal basic education and gender equity are the framing of education policies as ‘free,’ the politicization of policies to attract electoral votes, partisan politics and the discontinuity of education initiatives of previous governments, and the government’s over-reliance on foreign donor support.

Interestingly, the participants traced the source of gender inequity in public education to different sources. Whereas the parents indicated that political interference is the biggest challenge that must be overcome, the educators and policy officers indicated that socio-cultural factors lie at the heart of gender inequity in basic education. However, economic difficulties were cited by all three groups – parents, educators, and policy officers – as impediments. All participating groups emphasized the need to make funding and resources available to implement education policy initiatives.

The participants agreed that one of the outcomes of the current education policies has been to increase girls’ enrolment in school. However, they also agreed that the policies have failed to improve the school retention and completion rates of girls despite the creation of the Girls Education Unit and Girl-Child Facilitators, who are working to reduce drop-out rates and ensure that girls have equal opportunities to complete a full cycle of basic education. As for suggestions for achieving gender equity, the educators and policy officers at the Ghana

Education Service (GES) indicated that the government must build a collaborative framework involving all stakeholders. To address the barriers that stem from socio-cultural perceptions of gender, the participants proposed the need for stakeholders – teachers, policy officers at the GES, parents, traditional leaders, religious leaders – to work together. To be included as stakeholders are affiliate institutions like the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, the National Commission for Civic Education, and media agencies. Also emanating from the research is the need for government to make resources available to fund policy initiatives without relying on foreign donor support. As many of the participants pointed out that families with low incomes often make or encourage their daughters to work as domestic servants. Since neither these families nor the girls themselves can pay for education, the government must step in and adequately fund the basic level of education. An additional suggestion from the research participants is for government to de-politicize education, develop existing projects, and frame policies in ways that is transparent to the public.

Another compelling issue that emerged from the research is government's focus on using school supplies to close the gender gap but which is insufficiently funded. The focus on material supplies (free feeding, free school uniforms, or no tuition) without acknowledgement of cultural perceptions of gender cannot solve the problem of gender inequity. The material supplies in practice, are untimely, inadequate, and inconsistent in addressing the needs of girls in school.

Rather than aiming to close the gender gap through material provisions, the government need to focus on changing cultural attitudes that favour boys' education, which is predominant in some regions of the country. This focus involves considering regional differences in culture and understanding of gender and seeking ways to change traditional attitudes that discriminate against women and girls. In considering these cultural differences, policymakers need to be

aware that cultural perceptions of gender intersect with religion, politics, region, ethnicity, and the family system. Regrettably, existing education policies reflect the standardized interpretations of gender issues influenced by conformist ideologies with no consideration of the local realities and the differences in the experiences of girls and women in Ghana. Some of these realities include early marriage, traditional cultural practices, son-preference, polygamy, betrothal and Female Genital Mutilation. Universal values about gender can hardly lead to equal opportunities and equity in the Ghanaian context.

A third issue relates to the politicization of education policies at the national and global levels. There are tensions between the indigenous culture, Western hegemony, and ideology about gender construction and the social conditions of non-western countries (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Elabor-Idemudia, 2002). The Ghanaian government's over-reliance on foreign donor support leads to the loss of autonomy by African governments because, without their compliance to global development agenda's proposed by the World Bank, the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, there would be cuts in donor funding. Considering Ghana received USD 102,566,504 (Table 2.1, p. 29) for basic education in 2012 based on the expenditure report by the government, it becomes challenging for policymakers to seek alternative knowledge from indigenous sources to frame policies instead of from the Eurocentric masculinist knowledge that promotes standard solutions.

As European masculinist knowledge is the foundation for programmes of the United Nations, the World Bank, the Millennium Development Goals, the Structural Adjustment Programme, and Education for the Knowledge Economy, the lived experiences of girls in Ghana are overshadowed by technocratic definitions of gender and ways of achieving equity. The domination of European masculinist knowledge deepens the dependency relationship between

the West and its former colonies. In effect, domestic education policies often reflect the Western/global education agenda. An example is the Gender Parity Index (GPI) proposed by the United Nations for measuring gender equity in education. The GPI is the girls' gross enrolment ratio as a proportion of boys' gross enrolment ratio in basic education (Ministry of Education Report, 2015). The GPI has failed as a measure for evaluating girls' basic educational attainment in Ghana because the index does not capture the local context and experiences of girls in school (Unterhalter & North, 2011). Although the national enrolment rate was 110% for girls in 2014/2015 (Table 1.4, p. 10), the GPI could not measure retention or girls' school completion rate, which was 70.6% (Ministry of Education Report, 2015).

Gender parity is not the same as gender equity. Gender parity is the girls' gross enrolment ratio as a proportion of boys' gross enrolment ratio (Ministry of Education Report, 2015), whereas gender equity involves the treatment of people based on their respective needs so that their equal rights, obligations and opportunities can be achieved (Council for International Development, 2012). To achieve gender equity, people's needs must be met, in this case, cultural perceptions of gender and girls' experiences in school needs to be met in order to ensure their equal rights, obligations, and opportunities (Council for International Development, 2012). For there to be changes and improved access to equal opportunities, the space for knowledge must be expanded to include the experiences of all marginalized groups. Education policies seeking to be inclusive must acknowledge and consider knowledge derived from the experiences of girls and women within their specific locations and histories (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010) and should not focus on European expert knowledge, which is often tied to foreign donor support and economic frameworks for development.

### **8.3 Reflections and Insights**

Achieving universal and gender equity in basic education is an important topic because education is crucial to national development and poverty reduction and to provide individuals with the skills and the opportunity to live healthy and meaningful lives (Atta, 2015).

Additionally, the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which are a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals, and this study provide insights into the impact of the existing policies on basic education. Without education reforms in Ghana, the aims of SDGs to which Ghana is signatory will not be achieved by 2030. A qualitative research approach provides the opportunity to observe the environment of public schools and to understand the contextual complexities not typically facilitated in quantitative research designs.

The public school where most of the study interviews with educators took place had a decrepit infrastructure. Some of the infrastructural challenges were broken walls in the school buildings that enabled – goats, cattle, dogs, and cats – to regularly wander into the premises. Although the library where the interviews were conducted had shelves filled with textbooks, there were no study desks for the students to use, and the facility was mostly locked. Upon further inquiry, I was informed that the library building also had a separate room for computer training and that the Parent-Teacher Association funded computer laboratory. However, due to defaults in payment of the utility bills by the government, the computer room was locked, and students hardly used the facility. The poor school infrastructure and the unpaid utility bills are an example of the deplorable condition of public schools in Ghana. The condition of this particular school was somewhat surprising, considering the research site was in Tema, an urban metropolis in the capital region, where expectations are that schools are well set-up compared to more deprived areas of the country.

Despite the problems with the school infrastructure and facilities, the educators working at the institution were collaborative. At the school, I observed there were more female than male teachers. Of the school's 15 teachers, four were male. An inquiry into this gender disparity revealed that most of the female teachers had moved to reunite with their respective husbands in the metropolis. The Ghana Education Service fulfilled these teachers' requests to be reassigned to new districts so that they could join their husbands. The research participants (parents, educators, and GES officers) claimed that most of the students, especially the girls, were working as domestic servants or living with distant relatives. However, they also indicated that the girls' academic performance was relatively good (Chapter 5, p. 99). Participants suggested that the girls' academic performance could be associated with the high number of female teachers. They further suggested that in most rural areas, male teachers dominate, and that this domination might negatively impact girls' academic performance.

The school used as the research site had a girls' club led by a female teacher who served as the Girl-Child Facilitator. The club provided reproductive health education, guidance, and life skills, such as beading, to assist the girls in raising money to buy sanitary towels and underwears (Chapter 6, p. 130). Another insight connected to girls' education according to the educators is that the girls who scored lower aggregate in the final certification examination at the basic level were given more consideration than boys with similar scores regarding being admitted into Senior High Schools (Chapter 6, p. 131). As well, the participants mentioned that the government had created a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programme to expose the female students to role models so as to facilitate their academic interests and career ambitions in science (Chapter 6, p. 131).

According to government reports and the research participants, starting in the 2017-2018 academic year, there is on-going absorption of 70% of the registration fees of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (Government of Ghana, 2017). These subsidies are to cover the examination cost for registered candidates in both public and private schools at the basic level (Chapter 6, p. 138). As a result, students experiencing financial hardship can register and write the final examination. The participants maintained that this information would benefit underprivileged students, especially girls, who work mostly as domestic servants because their biological parents cannot afford to pay the fees for their education and so are more likely to invest in the education of their sons.

#### **8.4 Policy Recommendations**

Policy framing reflects the values or interests of those in power and sometimes the needs of consumers or average citizens (Graham, Swift & Delaney, 2012). According to the finding of this thesis research, the framing of education policies as ‘free’ is based on the value of accessibility of all consumers, including provisions such as free school uniforms, free school feeding, free textbooks, and the Capitation Grant (the abolition of fees). Although the government framed these initiatives as ‘free,’ the policy seems to be based on education substitution, meaning that the government is making certain resources (school grants, feeding, uniforms, and textbooks) available to support parental efforts. The policy of ‘free education’ is aimed at enticing consumers or average citizens to enroll their children in school. However, as the government is unable to fully fund the programmes associated with the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education, parents still pay for certain school services such as study fees. Since many parents are financially challenged, they cannot afford these services for all their children, and when faced with a choice, they invest on their sons. Thus, Ghana continues to face

challenges like school retention and completion, particularly among girls, and policymakers need to reevaluate their values and interests in developing basic education policies. Also, the policymakers must be transparent regarding the role of government policies and provisions for basic public education in Ghana.

Partisan politics need removal from education policies if there is to be continuity in policies targeting universal basic education and gender equity. Most Ghanaian governments tend to introduce new educational programmes without ensuring that the existing initiatives are expanded to cover all the regions. For instance, educators and policy officers complained about the exclusion of Junior High School students from the School Feeding Programme. According to the participants, to earn money for food, some adolescent girls engage in intimate relationships with old rich men. Before ensuring that current policy and initiatives are fully implemented, policymakers tend to introduce new programmes to demonstrate that their political party is contributing to the education sector.

Before the government proposes a new plan for the education sector, there is a need for an expansion in existing infrastructure, improvement in facilities, and Internally Generated Funds (from fundraising, auctions and philanthropy) to assist in the implementation. Using the Early Childhood Education centres as an example, policy officers mentioned the under-resourced conditions of the centres. In effect, the centres only house children without providing them with proper training, learning materials, and playgrounds (Chapter 6, p. 108). Since some of the parents see no value in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) centres, they prefer that their daughters take care of their younger children, sometimes at the detriment of these girls' education. Another infrastructure problem is toilet facilities in public schools. Having a national budget to construct and maintain school washrooms is essential as poor sanitary conditions deter



regular school attendance, especially for girls, who need a clean and hygienic place to clean-up during menstruation. Promoting ‘free education’ without proper school infrastructure, facilities, and teaching and learning resources does not address retention, completion, and gender equity.

Other essential steps for addressing the challenge of girls’ school retention is providing funding for the Girls Education Unit, the Girls Clubs, the Guidance and Counselling Coordinators, and the School Health Education Programme. The Girls Education Unit was set up in 1997 to work on reducing the dropout rate for girls (Atta, 2015; Ghana Education Service, 2002). The Ghana Education Service officer for Girls’ Education participated in this study and expressed her concern about the lack of funds, which affects the work of the unit in view of recent short supply of foreign donor support (Chapter 6, p. 131). The Girl-Child Facilitator, who coordinates the Girls Clubs in the schools, has raised similar concerns about girls who must sell plastic water sachets or beaded jewelry to fund the activities of the club that include buying sanitary towels and underwear (Chapter 6, p. 130). The lack of funding for the various units and clubs aimed at improving the experiences of girls in school is a barrier to gender equity and equal opportunity for girls to complete the full cycle of education.

There needs to be an inclusive policy formation process where the views of teachers dealing with realities in the classrooms are accommodated. The same applies to policy officers at the Ghana Education Service who organize in-service training for educators but are not part of policy decision making. The educators who participated in this study felt alienated from the policy formation process, yet most described their role as implementers of policy. Although leaders of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT), and the Coalition of Concerned Teachers represent educators in policy formation, there was a strong sense of alienation expressed by the teachers in the study

(Chapter 5, pp. 92-93). Creating the space to involve grassroots educators, along with representatives from their national associations, would increase their recognition, as well as promote alternative knowledge about girls' access, training, and retention in public schools. A change from the top-to-bottom approach in policy to a bottom-up approach is required.

Finally, more women in decision-making positions among political appointees are needed. With male dominance in Ghana's politics, policies tend to reflect the perceptions of men and their ideological beliefs about gender. Women's voices are not represented in existing policy processes due to their lower representation. Additionally, a collaborative approach to civic education about the cultural perceptions of gender must be ongoing and intensified. Stakeholders, including Ghana's Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, the National Commission for Civic Education, religious leaders, traditional councils, parents, students, educators, and media agencies must regularly engage in broadening the discourse on gender equity in education, incite a pragmatic dialogue, and tackle the socio-cultural barriers to basic educational attainment for girls.

### **8.5 Implications for Future Research**

Future research needs to focus on the opinions of policy administrators, educators, and parents in rural or remote communities in Ghana because there is substantial evidence to suggest that geographical location plays a vital role in the assessment of the impact of education policies. For instance, the issue of girls working as domestic servants in return for having their basic education funded might not be a major barrier to girls' education in rural areas. As well, the negative impact of social media, which stems from the infiltration of foreign cultures, likely will not manifest as problems for girls' education in rural areas because these areas have little or no access to internet services.

Another research implication is the need for a regional comparative study on the impact of education policies on gender. Each region in Ghana is characterized by different ethnic groups, traditions, and religion. Based on the research results, specific ethnic-cultural practices (betrothal, Female Genital Mutilation, *Trokosi*, *Bragoro*, *Dipo*, and *Kpojiemor*) and religion (Traditional, Christianity, and Islam) intersect to serve as barriers to girls' educational attainment. Since the Ghanaian society, culture, and people are not homogenous, a regional study would provide a more detailed understanding of what the key challenges are for girls' education.

The final area that requires attention is the voices of girls in Ghana. Future research must involve the views of girls enrolled in basic public schools. The opinions of girls are relevant to the discourse on gender inequity in basic education, especially now that Ghana has a 'Free Senior High School' policy (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2018). According to the policy officers and educators that participated in the study, the enrolment of girls has increased because of this new policy for free senior high education. Senior high school is the next cycle after the completion of basic education in Ghana. Future research should focus on the perceptions of girls regarding the basic educational attainment and the impact of the 'Free Senior High School' policy on retention and completion for girls.

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## **Appendix A**

Recruitment Poster

Letters of Invitation



Department of Sociology  
University of Saskatchewan



**PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR  
RESEARCH ON GENDER AND EDUCATION  
POLICIES IN GHANA**

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study of education policies and practices and their impacts on gender at the basic level.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to participate in an in-depth interview or a Focus Group Discussion.

Your participation would involve one session, which is approximately sixty minutes for interview participants and ninety minutes for Focus Group Discussions.

In appreciation for your time, you will receive **20 Ghana Cedis** for in-depth interview participants and **10 Ghana Cedis** for Focus Group participants

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

Abigail Zita Seshie

Department of Sociology – University of Saskatchewan  
at  
(001) 306-966-6947 or  
Email: [azs896@mail.usask.ca](mailto:azs896@mail.usask.ca)

This study has been reviewed by, and received approval through, the Research Ethics Office, University of Saskatchewan.



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Department of Sociology

Room 1019, 9 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A5 Canada

Telephone: (306) 966-6947

Facsimile: (306) 966-6950

E-mail: sociology@usask.ca

Date.....

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Letter of Introduction for Semi-Structured Interview Participants**

We are currently conducting a research project titled *Gender and Education Policies in Ghana: Pre-and Post-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*. The research study focuses on the basic educational attainment of boys and girls in Ghana. The study aims at examining education policies and practices and their impacts on gender at the basic level.

The Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) at the University of Saskatchewan has given its approval to this research [17-129]. The researcher is, therefore, required to abide by all the accepted principles governing this study, including the protection of participants' confidentiality, anonymity, and freedom throughout and after the study period. Data collection will involve semi-structured interviews which are expected to be conducted between November and December 2017 in Tema.

The study requires interviews with officials at the Ghana Education Service (GES), the Ministry of Education (MoE) and some head teachers in selected public schools in Tema. I intend to conduct ten interviews consisting of three officials from the Ghana Education Service (GES)-Tema branch and seven school administrators and teachers. Interview date and time to be negotiated with you if you decide to participate in the study. The venue for the in-depth interview will also be arranged for you if you choose to take part in the study. The semi-structured interviews will take 60 minutes per session. If the need arises, further meetings or correspondence will be discussed during the four-month period of data collection.

Your willingness to take part in the semi-structured interview will be appreciated as the knowledge generated from the data collected will serve to examine education policies and gender differences in basic educational attainment in Ghana. Should you require further information regarding this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the researchers listed below by phone or email. Attached to this letter is a recruitment poster.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Abigail Zita Seshie  
PhD Candidate  
Department of Sociology  
University of Saskatchewan  
Tel #: (001) 306-966-6947  
Email: azs896@mail.usask.ca

Professor Patience Elabor-Idemudia  
Principal Investigator  
Department of Sociology  
University of Saskatchewan  
Tel#: (001) 306-966-6933  
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E-mail: [sociology@usask.ca](mailto:sociology@usask.ca)

Date.....

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Letter of Introduction for Focus Group Discussion Participants**

We are currently conducting a research project titled *Gender and Education Policies in Ghana: Pre-and Post-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*. The research study focuses on the basic educational attainment of boys and girls in Ghana. The study aims at examining education policies and practices and their impacts on gender at the basic level.

The Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) at the University of Saskatchewan has given its approval to this research [17-129]. The researcher is, therefore, required to abide by all the accepted principles governing this study, including the protection of participants' confidentiality, anonymity, and freedom throughout and after the study period. Data collection will involve Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) which are expected to be conducted between November and December 2017 in Tema.

The study will require Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with parents of children enrolled in public schools in the selected area of study, Tema. I will conduct two FGDs with each group consisting of seven members. Parents will be accessed through the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) of public schools and by word of mouth. Volunteers are invited to participate in the FGDs by contacting head teachers of selected schools (schools that have indicated their interest to participate after receiving an official letter of invitation and a recruitment poster). The FGDs will be tape-recorded. The process will require at least 90 minutes for each FGD. The date and time will be discussed with participants and selected schools.

Your willingness to take part in the FGDs will be appreciated as the knowledge generated from the data collected will serve to examine education policies and gender differences in basic educational attainment in Ghana. Should you require further information regarding this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the researchers listed below by phone or email. Attached to this letter is a recruitment poster.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Abigail Zita Seshie  
PhD Candidate  
Department of Sociology  
University of Saskatchewan  
Tel #: (001) 306-966-6947  
Email: azs896@mail.usask.ca

Professor Patience Elabor-Idemudia  
Principal Investigator  
Department of Sociology  
University of Saskatchewan  
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## **Appendix B**

Consent Forms

Transcript Release Forms

Department of Sociology

Room 1019, 9 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A5 Canada  
Telephone: (001) 3006 966-6947  
Facsimile: (001) 306 966-6950  
E-mail: [sociology@usask.ca](mailto:sociology@usask.ca)

Date.....

***Participant Consent Form for Interview Participants***

**You are invited to participate in a research project title:** “Gender and Education Policies in Ghana: Pre-and Post-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)”

**Researcher:** Abigail Zita Seshie (Ph.D. Candidate)

Department of Sociology

University of Saskatchewan Campus

Tel #: (001) 306-966-6947

Email: [azs896@mail.usask.ca](mailto:azs896@mail.usask.ca)

**Supervisor:** Professor Patience Elabor-Idemudia (Principal Investigator)

Department of Sociology

University of Saskatchewan Campus

Tel #: (001) 306-966-6933

Email: [patience.elabor-idemudia@usask.ca](mailto:patience.elabor-idemudia@usask.ca)

**Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:**

The goal of the research study is to examine education policies and practices and their impacts on gender at the basic level.

The in-depth interviews with policymakers and educators will be used to collect data that provides information on the factors are given priority in the education policy formation, how policies are implemented, and their impact on girls’ education in the Tema Municipality of the Greater Accra region of Ghana.

The data collected will generate data and information that will broaden the existing knowledge on girls’ education in Ghana.

**Procedures:**

Data collection will involve semi-structured in-depth interviews expected to be conducted between November and December 2017 in the Tema Municipality. Government officials working at the Ghana Education Service will participate in the semi-structured in-depth interviews. I will conduct three interviews with officials from the Ghana Education Service (GES), Tema. The second phase of data collection will be the semi-structured in-depth interviews with seven school administrators and teachers in Tema

If the need arises, I will schedule further meetings or correspondence during the period of data collection. I will inform participants that completing the semi-structured interviews imply consent and grant permission for the researcher to use the data gathered per the guides described in this consent form.

Transcripts of interviews will be sent to you for a review discussion at the end of the data collection process for validation. The necessary corrections or clarifications and addition, alteration, or deletion of information from the transcripts will be made based on participant's request.

If after the verification, the transcript is satisfactory to the participant, the researcher will ask you to sign a transcript release form.

If there is the need to use the research findings during formal presentations and academic journals, the transcript text of interviews will be paraphrased.

Participants may ask to have the recording device turned off at any time during the in-depth interview.

Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role as a participant.

**Funded by:** International Development Research Centre (IDRC) - Canada

**Potential Risks:**

There are no potential risks. The study is purely academic and policy-oriented and not political in any way. Also, the participants are free to answer only questions they are comfortable with answering.

**Potential Benefits:**

The research beneficiaries include parents and their children if the findings lead to any policy changes.

The study is expected to offer new insights that will be significant to education policy reforms directed at addressing girls' retention and completion of basic of education in Ghana.

The study will be a basis for other researchers to build on the literature on gender and educational attainment in sub-Saharan Africa.

Additionally, the findings of the study could help shape the review of education policies and practices to identify areas in need of improvement regarding the elimination of gender inequity given the next phase of development, UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



**Compensation:**

Participants involved in the semi-structured interviews will be given 20 Ghana Cedis as an honorarium. The honorarium is a compensation for meeting the researcher in a neutral location where the researcher and participant are comfortable in doing the interview.

**Confidentiality:**

Information provided during this research is confidential. The research report will not be attributed to you unless you state otherwise. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity when the study findings are disseminated. The statements you make may be quoted, but your identity or name will not be used. Information gathered from you will be stored in secured cabinets and computer files.

**Storage of Data:**

Data collected by the researcher will be stored in a secured location separated from the consent forms in the Principal Investigator's office at the Department of Sociology for five years. When the data is no longer required, it will be destroyed (soft copy documents will be deleted while hard copies will be shredded).

**The Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation is voluntary, and you may answer only questions that you feel comfortable answering. You may withdraw from the research at any time, and you will not be obliged to offer any explanation or face any penalty.

Should you wish to withdraw, kindly indicate this desire to the researcher using the contact details stated at the top of this form. Upon withdrawal, your data will be destroyed immediately and will not be used as part of the study. In case you wish to withdraw your data from the study after completion of data collection and data analysis has already been embarked upon, you must understand it may be impossible since some aspects of research dissemination will have already taken place.

**Follow up:**

The results of the study will be sent to participants who indicate interest in the report on the transcript release form which will be sent to you after the data has been transcribed.

For participants with interest in the research report but choose not to review their transcript, indicate your interest in the Consent Section below.

A summary of the study's findings will be published on the Department of Sociology website (<http://www.departmentofsociology.sk.ca/research>).

**Questions or Concerns:**

To contact the researcher, please use the information at the top of page 1.

This research project has been approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) at the University of Saskatchewan. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to this Board through the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Office

[ethics.office@usask.ca](mailto:ethics.office@usask.ca) (001) 306 966-2975. The Tema branch of the Ghana Ministry of Education can be contacted through 030 3202349.

**Consent [SELECT APPROPRIATE OPTION(S) FROM BELOW]:**

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please put a check mark on the corresponding line(s) that grants me your permission to:

I grant permission to be audiotaped:	Yes: ____ No: ____
I wish to review the transcript of this interview	Yes: ____ No: ____
I want a copy of the research report but do not want to review the transcript	Yes: ____ No: ____

**Continued or On-going Consent:**

Please note, if there is a need for follow-up interviews, written consent will be sought again.

**Option 1 - SIGNED CONSENT**

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions, and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____ <i>Name of Participant</i>	_____ <i>Signature</i>	_____ <i>Date</i>
_____ <i>Researcher's Signature</i>	_____ <i>Date</i>	

**Option 2 - ORAL CONSENT**

Oral Consent: If on the other hand the consent has been obtained orally, this should be recorded. For example, the Consent Form dated, and signed by the researcher(s) indicating that "I read and explained this Consent Form to the participant before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it." Also, consent may be audio or videotaped.

_____ <i>Name of Participant</i>	_____ <i>Signature of Participant or Coordinator</i>	_____ <i>Date</i>
-------------------------------------	---	----------------------

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***

Department of Sociology

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Room 1019, 9 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A5 Canada  
Telephone: (001) 306 966-6947  
Facsimile: (001) 306 966-6950  
E-mail: [sociology@usask.ca](mailto:sociology@usask.ca)

Date.....

***Participant Consent Form for Focus Group Discussion***

**You are invited to participate in a research project title:** “Gender and Education Policies in Ghana: Pre-and Post-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)”

**Researcher:** Abigail Zita Seshie (Ph.D. Candidate)

Department of Sociology

University of Saskatchewan Campus

Tel #: (001) 306-966-6947

Email: [azs896@mail.usask.ca](mailto:azs896@mail.usask.ca)

**Supervisor:** Professor Patience Elabor-Idemudia (Principal Investigator)

Department of Sociology

University of Saskatchewan Campus

Tel #: (001) 306-966-6933

Email: [patience.elabor-idemudia@usask.ca](mailto:patience.elabor-idemudia@usask.ca)

**Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:**

- The goal of the research study is to examine education policies and practices and their impacts on gender at the basic level.
- The Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with parents will be used to collect data that provides information on the factors are given priority in the education policy formation, how policies are implemented, and their impact on girls’ education in the Greater Accra region of Ghana.
- The data collected will generate information that will broaden the existing knowledge on girls’ education in Ghana.

**Procedures:**

- Data collection will involve Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) expected to be conducted between November and December 2017 in the Greater Accra region. Two Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) will be conducted with parents in the selected area of study, Tema. Participants of the FGDs must be parents of children enrolled in public schools in Tema.
- If the need arises, I will schedule further meetings or correspondence during the period of data collection. I will inform participants that completing the FGDs imply consent and grant permission for the researcher to use the data gathered per the guides described in this consent form.
- The research report will be sent to you (participants in the interviews only) for a review discussion at the end of the data collection process for validation. The necessary corrections or clarifications and addition, alteration, or deletion of information from the transcripts will be made based on participant's request.
- If after the verification, the transcript is satisfactory to the participant, the researcher will ask you to sign a transcript release form.
- If there is the need to use the research findings during formal presentations and academic journals, the transcript text of interviews and FGDs will be paraphrased.
- Participants may ask to have the recording device turned off at any time during the in-depth interview.
- Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role as a participant.

**Funded by:** International Development Research Centre (IDRC) - Canada

**Potential Risks:**

- There could be minimal inconvenience because some of the questions might require participants to share their experiences with the challenges, they face in providing basic education for their children, especially girls. The risk will be addressed by informing participants of the nature and purpose of the study before the interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Participants will be assured that the study is purely academic and policy-oriented and not political in any way. Also, the participants are free to answer only questions they are comfortable with answering.

**Potential Benefits:**

- The research beneficiaries include parents and their children if the findings lead to any policy changes.
- The study is expected to offer new insights that will be significant to education policy reforms directed at addressing girls' retention and completion of basic of education in Ghana
- The study will be a basis for other researchers to build on the literature on gender and educational attainment in sub-Saharan Africa.

- Additionally, the findings of the study could help shape the review of education policies and practices to identify areas in need of improvement regarding the elimination of gender inequity given the next phase of development, UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

**Compensation:**

- Focus Group Discussion participants will be offered refreshments (soft drinks and pastries) for their time and contribution to the data collection process. The honorarium/refreshments are not dependent on your completion of the study. Hence, you can withdraw at any time during the data collection process.

**Confidentiality:**

- Information provided during this research is confidential. The research report will not be attributed to you unless you state otherwise. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity when the study findings are disseminated. The statements you make may be quoted, but your identity or name will not be used.
- Although the school administrators will invite participants for the FGDs through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting, they will not be present during the discussions. Adequate care will be taken to protect the information you provide. Please respect the confidentiality of other members of the group by not disclosing the contents of this discussion outside the group. Information gathered from you will be stored in secured cabinets and computer files.

- **Storage of Data:**

- Data collected by the researcher will be stored in a secured location separated from the consent forms in the Principal Investigator's office at the Department of Sociology for five years.
- When the data is no longer required, it will be destroyed (soft copy documents will be deleted while hard copies will be shredded).

**The Right to Withdraw:**

- Your participation is voluntary, and you can participate in only those discussions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, without explanation or penalty of any sort. Should you wish to withdraw, you may leave the focus group meeting at any time; however, data that have already been collected cannot be withdrawn as it forms part of the context for information provided by other participants.

**Follow up:**

- The results of the study will be sent to participants who indicate interest in the report on the transcript release form which will be sent to you after the data has been transcribed.
- For participants with interest in the report but choose not to review their transcript indicate your interest in the Consent Section below.

- A summary of the study's findings will be published on the Department of Sociology website (<http://www.departmentofsociology.sk.ca/research>).

**Questions or Concerns:**

- To contact the researcher, please use the information at the top of page 1.
- This research project has been approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) at the University of Saskatchewan. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to this Board through the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Office [ethics.office@usask.ca](mailto:ethics.office@usask.ca) (001) 306 966-2975. The Tema branch of the Ghana Ministry of Education can be contacted through 030 3202349.

**Consent [SELECT APPROPRIATE OPTION(S) FROM BELOW]:**

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please put a check mark on the corresponding line(s) that grants me your permission to:

I grant permission to be audio taped:	Yes: ____ No: ____
I wish to review the transcript of this interview	Yes: ____ No: ____
I want a copy of the research report but do not want to review the transcript	Yes: ____ No: ____

**Continued or On-going Consent:**

- Please note, if there is a need for follow-up interviews, written consent will be sought again.

**Option 1 - SIGNED CONSENT**

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions, and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	_____	
<i>Researcher's Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>	

**Option 2 - ORAL CONSENT**

Oral Consent: If on the other hand the consent has been obtained orally, this should be recorded. For example, the Consent Form dated, and signed by the researcher(s) indicating that "I read and explained this Consent Form to the participant before receiving the participant's consent, and the

participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it.” Also, consent may be audio or video taped.

---

*Name of Participant*

---

*Signature of Participant or  
Coordinator*

---

*Date*

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***



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Date.....

### DATA/TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM (*for Interview Participants*)

Project Title: "Gender and Education Policies in Ghana: Pre-and Post-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)."

**Researcher(s):** Abigail Zita Seshie (Ph.D. Candidate)  
Department of Sociology  
University of Saskatchewan Campus  
Tel #: (001) 306-966-6947  
Email: [azs896@mail.usask.ca](mailto:azs896@mail.usask.ca)

**Supervisor:** Professor Patience Elabor-Idemudia (Principal Investigator)  
Department of Sociology  
University of Saskatchewan Campus  
Tel #: (001) 306-966-6933  
Email: [patience.elabor-idemudia@usask.ca](mailto:patience.elabor-idemudia@usask.ca)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Abigail Zita Seshie. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Abigail Zita Seshie to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form.

I wish to receive a copy of the study report      Yes \_\_\_\_      No \_\_\_\_

Study report should be sent through:      E-mail [ ]      Post [ ]



This transcript release form was read and explained to the participant before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it.

---

Name of Participant

---

Date

---

Signature of Participant

---

Signature of researcher

*A copy of this transcript release form will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher*

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Date.....

**DATA/TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM (for Focus Group Participants)**

Project Title: "Gender and Education Policies in Ghana: Pre-and Post-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)."

**Researcher(s):** Abigail Zita Seshie (Ph.D. Candidate)

Department of Sociology  
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Email: [patience.elabor-idemudia@usask.ca](mailto:patience.elabor-idemudia@usask.ca)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have reviewed the complete transcript of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in this study, and have been provided the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what was discussed in my focus group. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to the researcher (Abigail Zita Seshie) to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form.

Please note that due to the nature of the process of identifying participants and the size of the sample; there may be some limits to confidentiality. However, adequate care will be taken to protect the information you provide.

I wish to receive a copy of the study report      Yes\_\_\_\_      No\_\_\_\_

Study report should be sent through:      E-mail [ ]      Post [ ]

This transcript release form was read and explained to the participant before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it.

---

Name of Participant

---

Date

---

Signature of Participant

---

Signature of researcher

*A copy of this transcript release form will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher*

## **Appendix C**

Interview Guidelines

Focus Group Discussion Guidelines



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Date:.....

### **Introduction of Researchers**

Abigail Zita Seshie (Ph.D. Candidate)  
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### **Introduction to Research**

We are currently conducting a research project titled **Gender and Education Policies in Ghana: Pre-and Post-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**. The research study focuses on the basic educational attainment of boys and girls in Ghana. The study aims at examining education policies and practices and their impacts on gender at the basic level. You have been identified as a government official working on implementing education policies. This an invitation for you to participate in an in-depth interview related to the above subject matter.

You may only answer questions you feel comfortable with and you may withdraw from the research at any time and will not be obliged to explain or face any penalty. However, if you wish to withdraw from the study after the completion of data collection and data analysis has already been embarked upon, it may be impossible to do so as some aspects of the research dissemination would have already taken place. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes, depending on the answers given and the need for a follow-up question. Thank you for the permission to grant this interview.

## **IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Participant pseudonym.....**

### **Job-Related Questions**

Gender:

Official Position:

The number of years you have been working in this position:

Official responsibilities/duties:

#### **a. What are the major considerations in framing education policy in Ghana?**

What factors informed government's decision to form basic education policies like the (GES Officials);

- I. Early Childhood Education (2004)
- II. Capitation Grant (Abolition of school fees) (2005)
- III. School Feeding Programme (2005), and
- IV. Free School Uniforms (2009)

Do policymakers involve officials working at the Ghana Education Service in the education policy formation?

What are the processes used to involve officials in your institution in the formation of education policy?

Does the government provide training or offer tools to assist officials to implement education policy?

**b. How does the Ghana Education Service communicate education policies to educators?**

What is the relation between your institution and school administrators and teachers?

Are there any established processes that communicate and engages with school administrators and teachers on a regular basis?

How does the institution inform school administrators and teachers about education policies (you can use any of the stated education policies above as an example)?

**c. Do education policies, consider the varied local context?**

Based on your experience, do girls and boys have equal opportunity to attend school and complete basic education considering the national education policy of Universal Basic Education?

In your assessment, do education policies impact girls and boys differently; considering the socio-cultural factors like ethnicity, religion, and regional differences?

How have education policies included some of these socio-cultural factors to ensure Universal Basic Education completion?

**d. How does the Ghana Education Service measure and evaluate the impact of education policy on boys and girls?**

How do you measure the effectiveness of basic education policies (you can draw on any of the stated policies on page 2 to give clarity to your answer)?

What is the timeframe for measuring/evaluating basic education policies and practices (Is this done yearly or every other year)?

Does the evaluation process involve collaboration between experts from your institution and school administrators?

Have the measures of evaluation improved how education policies impact boys and girls?

**e. From your standpoint, experience, and knowledge, what can be done to improve basic educational attainment for girls in Ghana?**

What are the challenges you perceive to affect girls' education in Ghana?

Should government focus on differences in some regions? For instance, those northern in Ghana experience higher gender differences in basic education attainment?

What are your thoughts on a cultural-sensitization education involving government officials (GES), educators, teachers, community groups/leaders and parents to address the traditional norms that affect girls' education?

What are the major lessons drawn from the implementation of the current basic education policies? How can these lessons improve future education initiatives aimed at eliminating gender inequity, especially at the basic level?

**Uprising Question**

In the 2018 national budget, the government increased the capitation grant by 100% (from 4 Ghana Cedis to 9 Cedis). What are your thoughts on the increase in school grants and how will this policy affect girls' education?

**Thank You.**



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### Introduction of Researchers

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### Introduction to Research

We are currently conducting a research project titled **Gender and Education Policies in Ghana: Pre-and Post-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**. The research study focuses on the basic educational attainment of boys and girls in Ghana. The study aims at examining education policies and practices and their impacts on gender at the basic level. You have been identified as those closest to service delivery in basic education. So, you are invited to participate in a Focused Group Discussion (FGD) related to the above subject matter. You may only answer questions you feel comfortable with and you may withdraw from the research at any time and will not be obliged to explain or face any penalty. However, if you wish to withdraw from the study after the completion of data collection and data analysis has already been embarked upon, it may be impossible to do so since some aspects of research dissemination would have already taken place. This FGD will take approximately 90 minutes (depending on the answers given and the need for follow-up questions). Thank you for the permission to conduct this Focused Group Discussion (FGD).

## **FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) GUIDE**

Name of school:

District/Region:

Group Number:

Group Gender Variation: Number of Male (.....)      Number of Female (.....)

### **a. What are your views on providing formal education for boys and girls?**

Do boys and girls have an equal opportunity to attending school and completing basic education?

As a parent/guardian do think girls' education has the same impact as boys' education?

In your assessment, how do your children (boy or girl) respond to going to school and engaging in schoolwork?

### **b. Are you aware of the education policies being implemented by the government to ensure Universal Primary Education?**

Have you heard of the following education initiatives;

- I. Early Childhood Education (2004)
- II. Capitation Grant (Abolition of school fees) (2005)
- III. School Feeding Programme (2005), and
- IV. Free School Uniforms (2009)?

How did you hear about the above education policies? Mention how any of the stated policies have benefited your children (especially girls) to attend school?

Do you think the current education policy of “no tuition, school feeding, and free uniforms” make it easy for girls to attend school and complete basic education?

**c. What is the impact of school activities for your children?**

Based on your experience are there gender variations/differences in children's commitment to learning?

How will you describe the role of teachers' in educating girls?

From your perspective, does the teacher-student relationship affects the gender outcomes in the completion of basic education?

**d. Does the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) provide information about government's education policies?**

Do you feel involved in your children's education and are you aware of the challenges they face in school?

Have issues of gender differences in school come up in PTA discussions (please provide examples)? How were these issues resolved?

What ways can the PTA increase parental involvement in girls' education?

Will an increase in parental involvement in children's education promote retention and completion of basic education, especially in the case of girls?

**Thank You.**

## **Appendix D**

Word Map

Word Cluster Analysis



